EVERY "BOY SCOUT" SHOULD READ THIS

AMERICAN INDIAN WEEKLY

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

THE TRAGEDY OF HANGMAN'S GULCH

"SO THIS IS THE LAST OF BAD BILL, DESPERADO, GUN-MAN, RENEGADE, OF HANGMAN'S GULCH," SAID THE SHRIEKING VOICE OF THE GHOST OF HORN MOUNTAIN.

No. 14 THE ARTHUR WESTBROOK COMPANY CLEVELAND, U. S. A. 5¢

PANAMA NIGHT

AMERICAN WEEKLY INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

VOL. I | THE ARTHUR WESTBROOK COMPANY, CLEVELAND, OHIO, U. S. A. Published Weekly. By Subscription, $2.50 per year; $1.25 for 6 months. | NO. 14

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The Tragedy of Hangman's Gulch

or

The Ghost of Horn Mountains

By COL. SPENCER DAIR

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

ROY JEROME—The handsome, brave, resourceful young surveyor in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. He was instructed to survey a stage-coach road from Fort Simpson, at the junction of the Liard and Mackenzie Rivers, in British North America, to Fort Enterprise, also in the great North-West. The route led through the Horn Mountains, and when the surveyor was stationed at Hangman's Gulch, a tiny hamlet, he first heard the grim warning of the Ghost of Horn Mountains. The romance that followed the warning of the spectre, and the dangers through which the young man passed, is a story of deeds and the man.

ENID WILSON—The romantic daughter of "Old Man" Wilson, the richest man in the hamlet of Hangman's Gulch. If at first feather-brained, and with a habit of dabbling in occult and ghostly things, that led her to a terrible situation one night in a lonely grave yard, Enid at last came to the front as a brave and clever girl who after all, found her heart's romance. Enid is a North Western girl of spirit, and she played her part in this true history of real people, in a way that endeared her to all her friends.

OWEN JUDD—Through this clever man there came much joy to his friends; and to his enemies there came the iron glove that shielded the velvet hand. Owen Judd is a man of deeds and was a fit associate and faithful friend of Roy Jerome's through many a dangerous enterprise. There is nothing that shows the test of a man so much as his ability to make friends and keep them.

BAD BILL WILLIAMS—Outlaw, counterfeiter, thug, gun-man, and desperado. He played his brief part with a high hand, but when the law that he had flouted set its hand upon his shoulder he met his fate like a man. There was no one that more deserved his dread fate than did bold Bad Bill, who fills a bandit's grave with his "boots on," and who died from the same gallows tree that took the life of his outlaw father.

OLD MADGE WILLIAMS—The witch-like hag mother of Bad Bill. Herself a criminal in spite of the fact that she knew the better path, she lived and died outside the pale of the law. Yet after all, Old Madge was to be pitied. In her death she showed her mother-love for the thug she had brought into the world and died uncomplainingly in a mad effort to save her worthless son's life.

TOM GODFREY—The jolly German who kept the White Rabbit saloon and gambling place in Hangman's Gulch. There was one thing about Tom that every one liked and that was his "jolly German accent."

TIM BRENNAN—Constable in the Royal North-West Mounted Police. And a right good chap at that, one that could take a joke, and a blow, and hold no grudge for either if it was given in fair combat of wits or fist.

MOOSEJAW—A Sioux Indian, and was the general errand boy for all the people living in Hangman's Gulch. The lad knew gold when he saw it, and knew how to ride when a real man's life was at stake.

CHAPTER I.

THE GHOST OF HORN MOUNTAINS.

"Beware! Return to your own country. Dreadful death awaits you at the point for which you are heading!"

A tall, white figure shrieked these words at Roy Jerome.

It stood high above him upon a craig that sprang from the side of the gulch along which he was progressing.

Roy Jerome gasped.

A thrill ran through his brawny form.

The phantom was waving its arms toward him while its gibbering white lips seemed to be muttering a curse.

"Beware! Beware!"

The spectral figure shrilled these words again.

Then it turned and fled, leaping from rock to rock, scuttering along dizzy heights until it vanished into the brooding purple-rim that marked the mysterious shades of Horn Mountains in Mackenzie territory, British North America.

Roy Jerome gasped.

He rubbed his eyes.

"By all the fiends from the grave, what was that?" he muttered.

His eyes traced the heights which the apparition had scaled.

"Could a human being climb those dizzy heights, glance down into those awful depths, and live?" Jerome muttered.

The heights and depths themselves seemed to silently make an answer to Jerome's words.

For nearly an hour the young man puzzled over the mystery.

No solution came to his wondering brain.

"I saw that figure," he argued with himself. "I am sure of that. I heard those words. I saw the figure rush away. By thunder, this doesn't seem to me to be anything my geometrical knowledge can solve."

At length Jerome continued up the gulch, pondering deeply upon the mystery of the vision he had seen.

Roy Jerome had expected some strange episodes would be met with when he and his gang of chain men started to block out a new stage-line, through the many miles of mountain, plain, heights and depths, between Fort Simpson, at the juncture of the Liard and Mackenzie Rivers, to Fort Enterprise, on the Coppermine River.

The Hudson's Bay Company who had employed Jerome to do the work was anxious for a direct method of communication between the two points.

The young surveyor, and his gang had started out full of hope.

They had made excellent progress.

Now they were in the midst of the great chain making up Horn Mountains.

Willow Lake, the gem of the mountain lakes, clear, bright and beautiful lay only a mile ahead. From it to Mackenzie River flowed the Willow River, a brawling, lusty stream.

Mountains, rivers, great patches of dense forest, wild beasts, all the terrors of the wild virgin world, only beginning to yield to man's domination lay about him on every side.

A few miles away Hangman's Gulch clung to the side of a rugged hill, the only town in a week's journey in any direction.

"I just give up this riddle," cried Jerome at length. "It's beyond my brain-power. I will go and find Owen Judd. He was up here a few months ago before we ran our line here. He may know something about this mystery."

Jerome started off at a good round pace.

His hunting-boots urged by a pair of strong legs, made good speed.

As he darted over the brow of a hill he saw Judd slowly moving along.

Still higher up the mountains ahead of Judd was to be seen the peeping heads of the chain-bearers.

"Hi, Judd!" yelled Jerome.

Judd was making those apparently aimless passes with his arms at the chain-men, which always cause wonderment in the non-surveying mind.

He stopped and looked back at Jerome.

"Hi, Jerome!" Judd called back.

"Come over here. I want to see you."

"Sure."

Judd hurried over to where Jerome now sat wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

"Say, Judd," broke in Jerome quickly, "I've seen a ghost."

Judd scratched the back of his neck.

"Hum," he said. "Was it a ghost of your past? If it was I don't blame you for getting up so much color and so much perspiration."

Jerome looked astonished.

"Quit joking," he cried. "Honest, it was a ghost."

"Hum."

"Now I know it sounds incredible. But it was a ghost."

"Ah."

There was dry sarcasm in Judd's tone.

Judd pulled a leaf from a tree and began to chew it.

His eyes searched the tall mountain whose snow-clad top was filmy with a winding-sheet of cloud.

"Say, Jerome, if you saw a ghost, I'll make a bet with you."

"What do you wish to wager?"

"Ten dollars."

"Canadian or American?"

"Canadian."

"But at the same time I am not stuck on the lady ghost that hailed me."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Continue going right ahead in spite of the *Ghost of Horn Mountains!*" answered Roy.

Like an echo of his words a malevolent laugh came hurtling down from the mountains.

"Beware! Beware! Death! Death!"

Thus again the phantom warned the two intrepid men.

The ghostly laughter rose and fell, like the squeaking of midnight wind skipping from grave-stone to grave-stone in a church-yard burial place.

"The warning again!" cried Roy. "Owen, listen!"

CHAPTER II.

THE FORTUNE TELLER'S PLOT.

"A t-a-l-l dark man loves you. A s-h-o-r-t man loves you. Take care! The cards tell of bloodshed. Your eyes will light the spark that may end in murder."

Old Madge, the fortune-teller of Hangman's Gulch, was muttering these words over a pack of greasy playing-cards in a dilapidated hut, foul, dark, and dreary.

Old Madge, a hag of uncertain years, violent temper, and unspeakable appearance crooned these words.

The crone's gray hair shaded her face.

But interested observers might have seen that behind the shield of the hair, peered shrewd eyes, covetous, and intelligent.

The twinkly eyes, still brilliant, although the wrinkled face showed the years that had passed since they began their scrutiny of events, was trying to pick the brains of a pretty girl that sat with her greta blue eyes fixed on the cards.

Her attitude betrayed the breathless astonishment that possessed her.

Enid Wilson was the greatest "catch" that had ever come to the net of the hag fortune-teller.

She was the only daughter of the richest man in the hamlet of Hangman's Gulch.

She was also the prettiest girl in the hamlet.

Why then, with fortune and position hers from birth, was Enid Wilson asking for the telling of her fortune?

Old Madge knew why.

This was the eternal mystery of a girl's heart.

Well did Old Madge know that there was a short man and a tall man each in love with Enid.

She might have added the various heights of two-thirds of the young men living in Hangman's Gulch. She would have been right all the way.

For Enid Wilson had many lovers who were anxious to be husbands, and the vexed wrinkle that showed between her eyes evidenced her desire to ask the cards which she should accept.

A foolish proceeding? But who can be twenty and wise?

Old Madge whose place in the hamlet was that of fortune-teller, laundress, utility woman, and what was more grevious, mother of Bad-Bill Williams, the gunman of the frontier, the counterfeiter, smuggler, thief, outlaw and terror of the town, had a thousand avenues down which crept information to her brain.

The information she in turn peddled out to those who "crossed her hand in silver" and soon became endowed with the popular belief that she consorted with the Powers Beyond the Grave.

No one harked back to the sources of the hag's information. No one seemed to see that she only gave them at second hand, the facts that she had slyly accumulated in her wanderings through the hamlet.

"Murder! Goodness!" cried Enid Wilson, "Oh, Mother Madge, do not tell me that there is to be a murder for my affections?"

"Child, look out, be careful," mumbled the witch-like fortune-teller. "A pretty face is a danger. It means trouble if you do not take care and not let the light of those blue eyes fall upon too many young men at once."

Enid simpered.

After all it's gratifying to be told that one is fascinating; that one has such beautiful eyes that one may cause murder to be done for a glance in one's direction.

It was so romantic. Really, quite Venetian, you know.

Enid smiled in happy content.

"Is there nothing that I can do to prevent a meeting of Mr.—I mean of the light and dark man?" the girl asked gently.

Old Madge's eyes scheming and bright narrowed to a mere slit.

Should she tell the girl—no—a little more mystery was necessary!

"Hush, girl! Would you drive away the Spirits of the Air that are near us?"

Enid's eyes grew large with dread.

She saw a tiny light far down the cabin near the floor grow bright.

It whirled about like a dancing, whirling dervish, until it stopped opposite her.

She felt the fleck of a hand pass across her face.

She jumped back with a squeal of fear.

Old Madge chuckled grimly.

"The spirits are here!" cried the crone. "There, see?"

A white shape came dancing toward the girl.

Poor Enid heard a faint rustle.

Something fell in the girl's lap.

The cabin appeared to grow light.

Enid looked at Mother Madge.

The hag lay back in her chair, her toothless mouth open, and snores coming from her long, slim nose.

Strange jerkings of her body, grunts, uncouth writhings, ended after a time in the opening of the twinkling eyes.

Old Madge sat up.

She passed her wrinkled trembling hands over her face.

The crone looked at Enid.

"Is it you dearie?" Madge said in a faint voice, "oh dearie me, but I was in an awful trance. I seen them spirits, a comin' from every direction."

The crone shuddered.

"Was it spirits that came here and left this package in my hands?" asked Enid in an awesome voice.

"What packet?" asked Mother Madge.

Enid extended it.

"It's addressed to you," Madge said.

"Why so it is," cried Enid.

Her nimble white fingers opened the note, which was written on a dirty bit of paper.

This is what the note said:

> "If you would know the name of your future husband, be at the oak-tree which stands in the church grave-yard in Hangman's Gulch at midnight. Place a piece of money worth *one hundred dollars*, in a hole you will find in the root of the tree. When you have done so, strike a match. You will find as you go out of the church-yard gate a note. Open it. It will contain the name of the man you will marry. The note will be pinned to the church-yard gate."

Enid's face was white with dread.

"You see," added Mother Madge, "that is the message them spirits has sent to you."

"Gracious! I never would dare to go alone to that spot. A church yard at midnight! Ugh!" said Enid.

"Dearie me," cried the hag. "How foolish! You'll go, my dear. I feel sure you will."

"But I can't go. I haven't any money. Papa says I'm so extravagant that he has shut me down to my allowance. I don't know where I could get a hundred dollars."

Old Madge leered horribly at the girl.

"Why your father has lots of money in his safe. Why don't you get some from it? He'll never know."

"Oh, I couldn't do that!" cried Enid in affright.

"Now I'll tell you then what you may do," cried Old Madge content to let matters take their course now. "You are good for the money. But dearie, I haven't any money but one great bill. One big bill; the savings of my life. If you will take that bill and will quietly put it in your father's safe and take gold out instead, why you can bring the gold here to me and I will loan you one hundred dollars' worth. Then you can keep your tryst at the church-yard tonight."

"How much is the bill for?" asked Enid.

"One thousand dollars."

"But why don't you take the bill directly to father? He will change it for you."

Old Madge shook her head.

"Don't let anyone know," the hag said as she sank her voice to a low whisper. "I owe your father money. I am not ready to pay it. It is borrowed money. If I take that bill to him your father would deduct what I have borrowed. You know what a hard man your father is."

This was a fact known to every man, woman and child in Hangman's Gulch.

Enid's father had the reputation of being "near" in his financial dealings.

With an expression that showed she fully understood the reason for the remarks of Old Madge, Enid finally consented to try and make the substitution.

"I suppose all you want me to do is to take that thousand dollar bill, and put it in my father's safe, get the same sum in gold, return here with the money to you, and you will loan me one hundred dollars till my next allowance day, when I will repay you?" queried Enid, who was anxious to show that she fully understood the request of Old Madge.

The cunning in Old Madge's face was infinite as she answered.

"That is all I want you to do. It is easy. Old Madge doesn't want more than is her due—of course you will pay me interest on the one hundred dollars, dearie?"

Enid promised.

"Then all you have to do is to hurry home and get the money," cried the crone. "I will be waiting for you here dearie."

"I will be back in an hour," cried the girl as she hurried toward her home.

Old Madge stood in a listening attitude for several minutes.

A great black cat with yellow eyes came and rubbed against her, but she let its blandishments pass unheeded.

Old Madge not content with listening, at length strode to the door and looked out.

Hearing nothing that seemed to announce the return of Enid, the crone with witch-like haste rushed back into her hut.

"S-t-t-s! Bill," she hissed.

A closet sunk into one side of the room, but with so much care that no chance glance would betray its hiding place, slowly opened.

A great shock of coarse black hair shading a veno-

mous face thrust itself into the vision of Mother Madge.

"Ah Bill! That's my good boy, come right out now. The girl's gone."

A stream of curses issued from the figure which made no motion to leave its hiding place.

"You fool," the man cried, "why didn't you open the ventilator in the back of this closet. I was—most suffocated."

"Bill, my dear boy. I forgot to do it. Oh, how badly I felt when I remembered. But I was deep in stuffing that fool girl, Bill, then, and you know my son, I couldn't leave."

A second string of oaths was the only reply.

"Billy boy, you did splendidly," cried the hag mother. "The girl never tumbled. When you threw those wet matches tied to that black thread out of the closet and then jerked them back to your hiding place, I was startled myself. It looked just like them spirit lights we read about that the real mediums produce."

"Them's the only lights any medium ever produced!" yelled Bill. "Why, Mother, there ain't no ghosts."

"Don't be too sure Billy. There's one in the *Horn Mountains* that's a ghost enough for you or any other man——"

"Now Mother," shrieked Bill with many more foul oaths, "don't you dare to speak of that ghost. It's—but why talk of it now?"

"Anyway Billy when you put the sheet over your head and stole out and dropped that note in Enid's lap."

The crone stopped and cackled forth her merriment.

Bill Williams, better known all over the North-West as Bad Bill, the outlaw, roared in deep base his merriment also.

"She fell for it, didn't she mother," the outlaw cried. "Talk about taking pennies away from a baby. Did you see her face after I had worked the spirit fire and the ghost-walk on her? Say, it was great."

"Yes, and when she read the note she was like a lamb led to the slaughter for she took the bait like a trout in Willow Lake."

"Did you give her the thousand dollar bill, Mother?"

"You bet I did."

"Which one?"

"The last you turned out."

"Look out, Mother. Wasn't that a pretty new bill to try and pass?"

Old Madge curled up her lips.

"Oh, Billy boy," she cried. "Do you take your old Mother for a fool? Bill, I washed that bill in coffee this morning."

"That will give it the aged look a bill that has passed about a good deal ought to have," put in the outlaw.

"We all know that, boy. Then I rubbed the bill in a handful of wood ashes, and after that I ironed it out, and then I ran it through a clothes wringer——"

"Good work, Mother," interrupted the hag's hopeful son, "we are safe I think. It doesn't seem to me that anyone can get on to us. I hated to have to work off any bill here in this hamlet."

"I know Bill, but boy your last drunk here took all the money I had to square things with the Chinaman you shot up. Oh, Bill, why will you get so crazy when you are drunk. It was a foolish thing a shootin' up of that Chink, Billy. You have been figuring in too much gun-work here lately. Remember how Hangman's Gulch got its name."

"Nonsense, Mother. The rope isn't twined that will hang me, nor is the hemp grown to make it with. I suppose they call this place Hangman's Gulch because of its being the place where they hanged men years ago, who didn't conform to certain laws, eh?"

"They brought men here ten years ago who wouldn't take a hint and jump out of the territory when their guns got too frequent and went off too sudden-like to suit some other people. Your dear father was hanged by a posse here one night."

"Do you know who did it?"

"I never knew. He was taken from this very hut and strung up by a band of men, one night about ten o'clock. I suppose because he was a pretty bad citizen and that was the way to get him to keep quiet."

Bad Bill sneered.

"The grave is pretty quiet," he cried. "But there ain't no posse that will ever git me here."

"Don't be too sure."

"You——old witch of a croaker. Shut up."

Old Madge did not notice this strictly non-filial remark.

"Oh, Billy boy," she replied, "be careful. I can't afford to lose you. You ought not to have tried to pass that thousand dollar counterfeit bill here. It's bad enough to make the queer money here, but you ought not to pass it any where here."

"Shut up. What else could I do. I was broke. I couldn't pay my passage out of town on the coach. We have got that girl to shove the cash in her dad's safe, and take out a thousand dollars in gold. They can't trace the gold back to us. If old Wilson discovers that there's a phony bill in his kick, he can't do more than put up a holler. The girl won't squeal, you bet. And we will have the gold."

"Don't you ever try again, Bill, to pass any cash here in Hangman's Gulch. Make all you want here, Bill, but shove it off somewhere else."

"Hist! Look out, Bill," the hag cried a second later, as she glanced out of the door. "There comes that

girl Enid back again. To your hiding place, boy. Be quick."

Enid Wilson as she sped back to Old Madge, with a thousand dollars in yellow gold coins in her pocket, little knew that she was about to enter the den of the most dangerous band of counterfeiters in the great North-West.

CHAPTER III.

THE $1,000 BILL'S FATE.

"Roy, that woman is on our trail all right," said Owen Judd to the young surveyor Jerome, as they both bent their glances in the direction from which the *Ghost of Horn Mountains* had sent them a deadly warning.

"No question of that. But I'm going to buck-and-wing dance all over my trail hereafter. I will give her ladyship the chase of her life—I mean death, my lad," replied Jerome.

"Thunder, Roy, I wish you had not seen that sprite. A shade of that kind ought to keep 'tother side of the grave. But now, Roy, what do you suppose she is?"

"Oh, she? A ghost."

"Really?"

"You bet."

"Out for our blood."

"Yes."

"You're fooling a poor wayward boy?"

"Not a bit."

"You take this thing seriously?"

"You bet I do."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Going to do nothing. What can a fellow do to fight a ghost?"

"Roy, you talk as if you believed in ghosts."

"I never did until I saw this one."

"Do you think this one is a real ghost?"

"I told you once I did."

"Well, I will be darned."

"You needn't be."

"Be what?"

"Darned."

"Oh."

"Don't mention it."

"I won't."

Owen looked furtively at Roy.

He did not know whether to take the surveyor at his words of such actual belief in the ghost, seriously or jokingly.

Owen knew that generally speaking Roy was a serious minded young man, a trifle too serious for his age and environment, but that possibly was not a draw-back in a man in a profession which required accuracy and poise in a marked degree.

"If Roy Jerome believes in ghosts as he says he does," thought Owen, "then things are turning upside down in this fair world. But by Jove, it looks to me as if he did have an idea that he saw a ghost. But while I didn't see the woman I certainly heard her voice uttering that warning. Thunder, how she did shriek it out."

Owen's flesh felt cold as he thought of the voice with such an unearthly tone, as it came whistling down to where he and Roy stood.

Owen shook his head in an argumentative manner.

"By George," he said, "if that ghost gets under my hat she will have me in a bug-house soon. I will shut up and stop thinking of her shady ladyship."

Roy Jerome said no more about the ghost so far as he was concerned but the gloomy expression on his face showed that his mind still dwelt on the strange spectre he had seen and was puzzled over the warning given him.

The two young men began busying themselves with the duty of their work and soon were jotting down the results of their efforts to lay out a stage route, in their field-book.

Two hours later Roy stretched himself with a yawn.

"What day is this?" he questioned of Owen.

"Saturday."

"By George, I'm glad I thought of it."

"Thought of what?"

"I must go down to Hangman's Gulch."

"What for?"

"Didn't you say it was Saturday?"

"I did. What's that got to do with your going to the Gulch?"

"Saturday is pay day."

"Sure."

"I haven't enough money on hand to pay off with."

"Oh."

"So I have got to go down to the Gulch and get a draft cashed."

"Ah."

"If I don't—well I've seen one ghost walk to-day, and if I don't get paid you fellows won't get a chance to see the pay-ghost walk to-night. Over Sunday in Hangman's Gulch with every body strapped isn't any fun, you know."

"That's right."

"So I'll go down to the Gulch, see Old Man Wilson, draw a draft for some cash on the Hudson's Bay Company Postmaster at Fort Simpson, Old Man Wilson will cash it. Then you boys will see the pleasant ghost walk to you about eight o'clock to-night bearing monies, for your hard work in trying to survey a decent stage road through the most in-fer-nal country any poor devil of a surveyor ever had to work in."

"Isn't it dreadful? Say, I've raised more rattlesnakes, catamounts, bears, wolves, coyotes, and God only knows how many other kinds of wild animals

since we left Fort Simpson, than I knew was in all the North-West. It's been a fierce stunt."

"I raised in addition an able bodied female ghost," cried Roy.

"Said ghost remarked things of a 'bewaring' line to me, and also to you, in a way perfectly scandalous," rejoined Owen. "Now you run away and get your coin. I'll rush out this last piece, and will send the chain-men, and the axe-men and the markers all back early. You meet 'em at the Gulch. Give me some cash then and I'll take you over and buy you stuff to take away the sulphur smell and taste that ghost you saw up here has left in your mouth."

Roy gave Owen a wry smile.

He then trudged down toward the hamlet leaving Owen to finish up the day's work.

In the three months that he had been about Hangman's Gulch, Roy Jerome had made many friends.

Many a cheery nod, and pleasant word fell to him as he hurried down to Old Man Wilson's bank, which consisted, by the way, of a safe, and a general stock of groceries, likewise tin ware, and stoves and general hardware. There was further, a butcher-shop that stood near the safe.

Old Man Wilson, was all there was to the business of the town.

There were other stores, but no one carried the stock that Wilson did.

He boasted that you could "cash a draft in my store, biggosh, and could get married, have children, die, and be buried, from my stock, as long as your cash held out."

Which was literally true.

For "Wilson's" carried a stock for everything a man needed, even to "good lickker," all under one roof.

After all, in Hangman's Gulch, a store might be the biggest one in the place and look small.

The magnificent ideas of the place entertained by the proprietor, did not appear to abash Roy in the least.

He threaded the store through, like a great crumpled fly, until he reached the office in the rear, where the tall, spare form, and long whiskers of Old Man Wilson, ought to have been seated.

Instead Roy saw Wilson's very pretty daughter, Enid, just closing the safe door, when he entered.

Roy gallantly raised his cap, when he saw Enid stagger backward with a stifled "oh," as she sharply shut the safe-door.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Enid," the surveyor said, "did I startle you?"

Enid smiled.

"Y-e-s," she faltered, "you did frighten me, a l-i-t-t-l-e."

"Is your father in?"

"No. He has gone home for the day."

The roses were coming back to the girl's cheeks.

Roy wondered if she knew how pretty she was.

"That's unfortunate," continued Roy.

"Why, pray?"

"I had some business with your father."

"That's too bad. Was it important?"

"Quite so."

"Shall I run over to the house and get him?"

"No, you need not do that. I will run over."

"But possibly I may be enabled to assist you to what you want without your sending for my father."

Roy thought a moment.

Why could not this girl, the daughter of the owner of the bank and department store, cash his draft?

This thought passed through Roy's mind.

"Why not?" the surveyor answered the girl lightly. "I just wished to get your father to cash a draft, don't you know. It's pay night for my gang. I find I haven't enough cash to settle up with."

A feverish glitter came into Enid's eyes.

Was there ever such luck?

She had just placed the $1,000 bill given her by Mother Madge, the hag fortune-teller in the safe.

She did so in great fear.

She knew how careful her father was to count and classify all the cash in the drawer each night.

She had wondered how she could account for the substitution of the bill in the cash-drawer for a thousand dollars in gold, which she had effected but had decided to tell her father that a traveller had come in while he was gone, asked her to change the currency for the gold, and that in the kindness of her heart she had obliged the caller.

But here was a way out.

Could she manage to foist the bill upon Roy Jerome?

All these thoughts darted through Enid's mind.

But it was only her heightened color that betrayed these inner emotions.

"How much will the draft be for?" Enid asked.

"For one thousand dollars."

The girl gave a jump.

She saw her way clear now.

"I don't think I have a thousand dollars in the safe now," she remarked in a hesitating voice, "that is in small bills, or gold. I have sent all the money out—except oh, wait, Mr. Jerome."

Enid appeared to recollect some things for the first time.

She opened the safe, which stood just behind her, quickly.

She dove down into an inner drawer.

A bill fluttered in her hand.

It was a bank bill; the bill of the denomination of one thousand dollars.

It was the counterfeit bill given to the girl by the hag, Old Madge.

Enid did not hesitate now.

She turned to Roy.

"Oh, Mr. Jerome," she said, "I have a thousand dollar bill here. If that will do, you are welcome to it."

Roy thought hard a moment.

"Yes, it will do very well," he cried. "I can run over to the White Rabbit saloon across the street. They can change the bill, I'm sure. Then I can pay the gang off."

"If you will draw up the draft—here's a blank," remarked Enid whose heart sang with joy.

She had passed the fatal bill, had turned it into the gold, the fortune teller wished for, she would be able to keep her church-yard tryst, and she would not have to tell her father of the substitution of his gold for Old Madge's bank bill.

"Was there ever such luck," thought the girl.

Roy for his part intent upon the drawing up of the draft did not see the changes in expression that came over Enid's face.

He handed over the draft upon the Hudson's Bay Company, in which he had added the usual exchange cost, took the thousand dollar bank note with a smile, raised his cap, and wended his way across the way to the White Rabbit saloon.

Tom Godfrey a fat, happy looking German stood at the bar when Roy entered.

"Ho," Mr. Jerome aind id, vos effer such luck. You koom und dreenk wiz me," roared Godfrey as soon as he saw the surveyor.

"Just the man I want to see, Tom," answered Roy. "Come over for change for this bill, will you?"

Roy handed the saloon-keeper the fateful thousand dollar bill as he spoke.

"A t'ousan, sure?" the saloon keeper cried.

He pulled a wonderful great roll of bills out of his pocket, which made Roy remark that "that roll would choke a cow" and soon had counted out a pile of green backs which represented the thousand dollars called for in Roy's single bill.

The two men stood at the bar and chatted gaily together.

When each had "treated" several times Roy sauntered into the faro room of the saloon, watched a few deals of the cards and then turned toward his hotel, which further down the street bore the sign, "Occidental Hotel."

Roy called the hotel "Accidental" which came nearer the truth than the original sign.

It was without doubt an accident that caused the hotel to be started as a hotel, first, and continue as one, second.

"How goes it, Roy," cried Owen Judd the moment Roy reached the hotel.

"Fine."

"Get your draft cashed?"

"Yep."

"Well, the boys are waiting for their pay."

"All right. Tell them to hustle up to our room in fifteen minutes and I'll be ready."

"Good leather. I'm pining to spend part of my cash. Say, did you go into the White Rabbit?"

"Sure."

"Any game on?"

"You aren't going to buck the tiger, are you?"

"Never you mind. Answer my question."

"Well, if you must have an answer—did you ever know when the White Rabbit didn't have a game on?"

"No."

"Well, there was one on."

"Who was winning?"

"The bank."

"That is the saloon."

"Exactly."

"House usually does win."

"Surest thing in this world. Why you chaps will work hard to get money and then will run in here and play it in against a game you haven't the slightest chance of downing, is a mystery to me."

"Don't you think the White Rabbit faro game is a square one?"

"Sure it is. But don't you know that you are doing the guessing? The saloon faro-bank dealer isn't guessing. He simply bets against you. The result is that you can't keep on guessing right. You may guess right some of the time but not all of the time."

"Then in the times I don't guess right the banker reaps all I've made when I do guess right?"

"Usually. The percentage is that while out of twelve players, six may win, six will lose, and that of those six, the losses will nine times out of ten be greater to the bank than the winnings of the other six."

"Hum! You don't think I can beat a faro game?"

"Not all the time. You may beat it to-night. But you'll loose to-morrow. The bank is always there with the 'splits' in its favor, the 'sleepers' don't you know and all that sort of thing."

"By splits you mean the division which comes when cards of an equal value lose or win?"

"Yes."

"By sleepers you mean the bets that are put down by a reckless gambler and forgotten, or by the bets made on cards that are 'dead'; can not come out of the card-dealing box possibly and are forfeit to the house."

"Sure."

"If you think my bank is a sure winner, how about your sure money game," said a strange voice, harsh and menacing.

The two men whirled around.

Tom Godfrey, owner of the White Rabbit saloon, Old Man Wilson, the banker, and a man whom Roy and Owen knew was a constable in the Royal North-West Mounted Police, had entered the room.

The speaker had been Tom Godfrey.

"What do you mean by coming in here unannounced?" shouted Roy, now thoroughly angry at the intrusion upon his privacy.

Tom Godfrey sneered.

He pointed at Roy.

He turned to the Constable.

"Constable," he howled, "do your duty. I charge that man there, Roy Jerome, with passing a counterfeit one thousand dollar bill on me not two hours ago."

CHAPTER IV.

THE PLOT THICKENS.

There was a sneer on the face of Old Madge the Fortune-teller.

She was narrowly scanning the face of her boy, Bill Williams, the outlaw counterfeiter of the North-West.

"Didn't I tell you, Bill, the girl would come back with the cash? Look here, Billy boy, look here."

There was a gleam of covetous love in the witch-like eyes of the aged woman, whose hag-like features had lost all their early beauty.

"Gold! Gold! Gold!"

The woman's voice rose almost to a yell of glee.

"Good old yaller boys," cried Bill, as he took roll after roll of coined gold-pieces from his mother's lap, and let them roll all together in a great shining stream of discs of yellow metal. "Say, mother, what fun there is in every one of those gold pieces. Say, I'd sell my soul for a little more of that stuff."

"So would I, Billy boy. So would I. Oh, if you only could make the coins like this? Billy boy, you wouldn't have to work so hard turning out the bogus bank bills. Why don't you try, Billy boy?"

"No use, mother," replied the outlaw. "You can't get rid of gold the way you can counterfeit bank-bills. Gold isn't in circulation much and every time one tries to shove the queer, if he's placing out (spending) the gold boys, it creates comment. Bills is what people is used to, old woman."

"I suppose you're right, Billy boy, but oh, some times when your big plate press is a shaking the hut these nights, oh, Billy, I'm scared. It's far out of town here, but Billy, the officers may get wind o' what you're doing, for that press may some time make so much noise that some one may get wise. Take care, Billy boy, take care."

"Oh, well, if I've got to do my stunt in jail again, all right. I've been up three terms now. I'm forty-five now. Another bit (term) would send me from a prison cell to the grave. I wouldn't live to serve out another term for shoving the queer."

"Oh, Billy be careful. What would I do without my great, grand, splendid boy?"

It was a scene to make an angel weep.

An aged crone, crime stained, fierce, wicked, with her old eyes shining with pride because her only son, whose father had been lynched for his misdeeds, was a successful counterfeiter, the most dangerous man to civilization that exists in the criminal world, for he strikes at the basis of all civilization, money.

"Don't you care, mother," cried the big thug. "No man gets me this trip. I won't serve another term in jail or in prison. It's 'pop goes my head off' when I see I can't wiggle by the cops."

Bill made the motion of placing a revolver to his head, pulling the trigger and dropping to the floor, dead, to fill a suicide's grave.

Old Madge shrieked in horror.

"No, no, Billy boy," she howled, "not that. Never that. While there's life there's hope, Billy; remember that, boy. No! Just be careful and not get ketched."

Bill Williams, his evil face distorted, knew that he was skating on thin ice.

Any moment the officers of the law might hem him in.

He had chosen the way of the counterfeiter because he had judged that in the outskirts of the lonely hamlet of Hangman's Gulch no one would suspect that he, with his witch-like mother, was engaged in printing the bogus bank-bills; and he could undisturbed carry his out-put to other more settled points of the North-West, and there could pass the stuff upon unwary persons.

His last "drunk" however, ran him so short of funds that he had to make the desperate experiment of floating a bogus bill in the hamlet where he lived, and now that his, and his mother's plans had "come to him," as he expressed it, he was very well satisfied.

"We win the trick, old gal, don't we?" Bill went on, after he had feasted his eyes upon the shower of gold. "How did you sell your gold-brick to that pretty gal—say mother, she's a good-looker, all right, isn't she?"

"Now, Billy boy, don't you go for to lookin' at her. She's rather too high for Bad-Bill, and besides I don't want you to marry a fool."

"Huh?"

"Yes, she's a fool. To let me sell her a brick like the one I did. She toddled home with that bogus bill, toddled to father's safe, and got the gold in exchange for the bill, and toddled back to give me the gold."

"Was there ever such a fool?" growled Bill.

"No. But after all a girl's vanity will lead her a long ways. Longer than I'd like to talk about."

"How?"

"Enid is so crazy to be married that she'd do anything to edge along toward that husband she is looking for."

"Ain't there enough fellows dangling after her? Why don't she pick out one and send for a clergyman?"

"Billy boy, a girl is always looking out for the other man. She wants that indefinite chap that isn't here, not the one that is at hand. So Enid fell into our trap. Lord, what a fool!"

"Did you let her have the one hundred plunks to put in that graveyard?"

"I let her have one hundred nothings?"

"Yes."

"I let her have one hundred dollars, as represented by one of your bogus bills, and when she comes to pay me, Billy boy, she will pay me in good money."

Bill's laughter was enough to shake the house.

"Why, just think," he cried, "you get that fool to exchange a bogus bill for real gold coin; you then give her a hundred dollar bill, which she will not give back to you, but will leave in the grave-yard, but she will repay you in good money, when she gets her allowance—and then——"

"Billy boy, you are going to go out to the graveyard to-night and get that bogus hundred dollar bill. You can pass it over again."

"Oh! Ho! Hee! Ho!" shrieked Bill's wild laughter. "Oh, mother, it's a clean up. Talk about counterfeiting. Prate of highway robbery—mother, that's High Finance. You ought to be down in Wall street. You're out of your class here."

The crone grinned in appreciation of Bill's admiration.

"I flatter myself, I'm the goods," she cried. "Didn't I get to that gal in good shape? Say, she ain't got anything left. I took it all, all the cash she had and didn't leave her the price of a chocolate caramel."

Mother and son chuckled in unison for a space.

"Well, mother," at length said Bill, "you'd better give me that money."

"You will let me have a little for myself, Billy boy?"

Bill snarled a curse at the hag.

"Not on yer life. Wot te'ell do you need money fer? If you want any git out and earn it. This stuff came over so easy that it's crooked cash. That's *my* kind of cash. You go and take in washing, and get clean money, old woman."

Old Madge knew her son would not relent. She had seen him take too often all the profits that came from her demon-like schemes.

She only whimpered as she gave Bad Bill all the gold.

"Now, mother," the outlaw yelled, "you come along with me and run the plate press. I ain't agoin' to be long, but I want ter git about fifty thousand ten dollar bogus bills run off quick. I want ter express 'em out marked 'papers' on the next coach for Fort Coppermine."

"Ain't that pretty dangerous?" asked Old Madge? "They might open your package on the coach and then where would you be?"

"Oh, I've masked the papers. The papers are heavy sheets of blotting-paper, and I've split each sheet and packed it full with the bills, and then have pressed down the blotting paper in the plate-press, so it looks as solid as when made. Old woman, say, if they got a piece of the blottin' paper, they'd still think it looked like a blottin' paper; no one 'ud ever suspect that the paper had been doctored."

"Hee! Hee! Hee!" tittered Old Madge, "After all, Billy boy, I ain't the only slick one in this game. You boy, are about the best in the game."

Bill looked gratified.

"We make a pair, any how," he admitted. "Now come on, old woman, help me run off them bills."

Bill led the way to the closet where he had watched Enid and his mother in the farce-tragedy the crone had figured in, and in which Bill assisted by playing the part of the spirit, and also in making the fairy lights.

Into the closet he escorted his mother.

Bill then fumbled with a padlock that confined a steel bar to the floor.

Soon he opened a trap door in the floor and down into a cellar-like cistern, the mother and son disappeared.

While Bill was lighting lamps in the depths of the cistern, Bill's mother dared not stir.

She well knew that Bill alone had access to the place where he made the counterfeit money.

Old Madge was never allowed to go into the printing room, unless Bill was with her.

The place selected was a strange one.

It was a cistern to the hut above.

This cistern had been built under a pretentious house that three years before had stood upon the present site of the house.

A fire had destroyed the house.

Then Old Madge had squatted on the site, building her hut over the old cistern, but which was allowed to stand waterless.

In the search for a place to conceal the plant by which he carried on his counterfeiting operations Old Madge's son, Bad Bill, has found the cistern just the secret place he wanted.

He had tapped the concrete wall, and had run ventilators up to the surface of the earth. He had also seen to it that the ventilators were not to be seen from the outside.

A row of lamps along the walls of the deep cistern gave light.

In the center of the cistern was a great printing press, such as are used to print money upon.

Where Bill had secured the press his mother did not know. But no bank note printing company ever had a better one.

"Is that the plate-press you have just had put in?" Old Madge asked.

"It is. Cost a lot of trouble to get it here bit by bit and piece by piece but here it is."

Bad Bill handed his mother a steel plate, just the size of a ten dollar Canadian bill.

"Look," he cried, "isn't that a fine plate?"

The mother looked.

She could see the lines engraved in the shining bit of metal.

She saw the shadowy outline of the bill, the plate would soon produce when placed in the press, inked, and then printed on excellent imitation of real bank-note paper that stood in a great pile one side of the cistern.

"Kick the press, mother."

The old woman got up in a frame in the center of which was a seat.

She sat down and began treading upon a wooden endless-chain like platform.

It took muscle to start the chain moving and the woman panted and coughed but finally speed came, the large fly-wheel of the press began to revolve and soon Bill was watching the counterfeit bills come rustling from the press into which he fed the blank, imitation bank-note paper.

"Kick her hard, old woman," howled Bill.

It was a beautiful story all this, of son-like devotion to an aged mother!

So amid the curses and abuses of Bad Bill showered upon his mother, was born the numberless counterfeit children of crime.

Working away all senses strained upon the manufacture of the bogus stuff Bad Bill and Old Madge did not see a shadow make a huge bulk of darkness upon the ladder-like stairs that gave egress to the hut above.

The shadow danced ahead of something that was alive.

The lamps marked slowly the stealing into view of a brawny hand of a man.

The hand clutched a powerful magazine revolver.

Then there followed the hand in cat-like manner the form of a man.

The man's face was picked out by the lamps finally.

It was white, and writhing with the intensity of its emotions.

The figure stopped.

The white face and snapping eyes, seemed to be gazing down into the den of Bad Bill Williams, and his mother, Old Madge, counterfeiters.

CHAPTER V.

ENID WILSON SEEKS HER FATE.

The wind soughed through the trees of the only burying-ground in Hangman's Gulch.

It was a cloudy night, but now and then the banks of fleecy white that hid the light of an early moon parted, and for a few moments the scene was brilliantly lighted.

The solitary and only church in the Gulch, which was not patronized except by the female portion of the inhabitants of the place, stood with its tower looming up into the sky spectral and tall.

Around the church were many graves.

Some had tomb-stones ornate and blatant.

These marked the homes of the recent dead.

Others had tomb-stones that seemed to be staggering about on a ghostly "bat."

These were the graves of the forgotten dead.

The entire atmosphere about church yard and grave-yard was one of loneliness and phantom-like dread.

Into the grave-yard, fearful, trembling, white-faced and anxious crept Enid Wilson, just as the bell of the clock in the church above her sounded the knell of midnight.

"'If you would know the name of your future husband, be at the oak-tree, which stands in the church grave-yard in Hangman's Gulch at midnight,'" the pretty white lips of the girl muttered. "That is what the note said. Oh, dear, I wish I didn't want to know. I'm frightened nearly to death."

But Enid in spite of her fright was bound to know that future hubby.

She stole quietly to the center of the grave-yard.

There stood the big oak-tree, in the roots of which she had been instructed in the spirit message, to place "a piece of money worth one hundred dollars."

The girl started forward.

There was a burst of many wings as she approached the tree.

Enid shrank back with a cry of fright.

The wings went scurrying away into the darkness.

She nearly fainted.

Her courage returned when she found that the wings beating the air came from the hurried exit of a family of crows.

Enid had unfortunately disturbed their night's repose.

In spite of herself Enid giggled.

"Frightened half to death by a lot of crows," she breathed. "Isn't this idiotic? Here I am fooling my rest away in the depths of a spooky church yard trying to find out something that in romantic silliness I could have left to time to reveal—it seems to me that I'm an idiot all right."

The girl, however, did not give up her mission.

Instead she hurried along, fearful of every grave, darting into a shadow if a mouse crept over a dry leaf, and thus startled her strained senses.

"Ah!" the girl cried. "There is the tree at last!"

She did not stop to think that she had almost reached the tree once before but in her fright had run away from it making through her cowardice two trips over the same ground.

"Here at last," she said. "Now to get the paper containing the name of my future husband——"

Enid stooped down.

She saw something white buried in a bit of moss and earth with one end sticking out.

"The paper," the girl whispered.

Her hand grasped it.

But before she could wrench the paper from its hiding place a second hand, cold, and white closed over her hand.

A shriek of fright burst from the girl's lips.

"Hush!" cried the voice of a man.

Enid sank to her knees.

She stilled her cries of alarm.

Her wide-opened eyes gazed at the man who stood by her side now.

His face was hidden in a long black cloak.

This draped his figure so that he could not be seen.

Except that the form was that of a man all was hidden beneath the engulfing cloak.

Enid saw this much in one glance.

"Who-o-o are you-o-o," her voice trembled.

The figure stood silent.

"Why-y are-r-r you-o here-r," added Enid.

She was frightened, almost speechless; almost.

The man at length spoke.

"Why are you here?" he said.

"Who are you?" gasped the girl.

"Never mind. Why are you here?"

"I will not tell you."

"You must."

"How dare you ask me anything in the tone you have adopted?"

"Why should I not?"

"Don't you know that you are speaking to the daughter of the richest man in town?"

The figure laughed in a sneering tone.

One black-covered arm pointed to a grave beneath his feet.

Enid's heart grew cold.

"There in that grave lies the daughter of a man who when she lived became known as the 'richest woman in town.'"

"Yes-s."

"She is dead, and she is the equal of that woman in that grave over there behind you."

Enid whirled about as if shot.

"There in that grave is the daughter of the poorest man in town."

"What of it?"

"In this church-yard both are now equal. Worms feed upon the cheek of the rich girl and the poor girl. Death is a great leveler. And even in life the feet of the richest man when they press the ground are on a level with the feet of the poorest man."

Enid trembled.

For the first time in her pampered life she saw that there was no distinction in the grave between the rich and the poor.

In the silence of the eerie spot there came the feeling that after all riches did not count for so much.

Enid pressed her handkerchief to her blue eyes, about to take refuge in woman's chief refuge and weapon.

"Don't cry. Tears are useless here. You had better save your tears and confess why you are here."

"I won't."

Enid snapped the words.

"I think you will," gravely came the answer.

"Why?"

"'An open confession is good for the soul.'"

"I am not going to confess; even if there's anything to confess."

"You are."

"I won't."

Woman like with the final refusal, and statement that "she wouldn't," Enid broke down and "confessed."

It was all due to Old Madge.

The man was silent for some seconds.

"Who is 'Old Madge'?" he added in an altered tone of voice.

There was surprise manifest in his tone inflection.

"She is a fortune-teller."

The girl's words seemed to invoke laughter in the man's mind. He could be seen to be struggling with some inner note of merriment.

"Oh, Old Madge is a fortune-teller."

"Yes."

"Did you consult her as to your fortunes?"

"Yes-s-s."

"But you told me that you were the daughter of the richest man in Hangman's Gulch a moment ago. Why did you want to consult Old Madge? So as to find out whether you were going to be richer, some day?"

In the fitful moonlight the man saw Enid shake her head in protest.

"It wasn't money," she faintly replied. "I didn't consult her about money."

"Hum!"

"What did you say?"

"Nothing. What did you consult the fortune-teller about?"

"I will not tell you."

"You will."

"Man, if you say another word to me I will scream for help."

The figure in reply sat down on a tomb-stone.

"Do you hear?" snapped the girl. "Leave me or I will scream for help."

The stranger shook his head.

"You will neither leave me, I will not leave you—"

"You will," cried the girl.

"And you will not scream for aid," went on the man, with a calm menace in his voice that stilled the girl.

"Why will I not scream for aid?"

"Because you are only a pretty fool not a crazy one."

Enid staggered back hardly believing that the words had been spoken.

"A fool?" she cried in rising anger. "A fool?"

"Yes, a fool."

"How dare you!"

"Is not any girl a fool who leaves her home, and comes to a grave-yard at midnight?"

The argument checked the rising anger of the girl.

"Perhaps?" she admitted reluctantly.

"Isn't any girl a fool who will spend half an hour talking to a strange man in the church-yard, and then threaten to call for help?"

"Why not?"

"I suppose it is to be an easy matter for you to explain to your friends why you met a strange man in a church-yard?"

Enid saw it all now.

She knew that she dared not scream.

"What possible explanation could you make of the meeting with me here?"

"I don't-t know-w-w."

"You would be fearfully compromised. No one would believe your story and your reputation would bear an undeserved stain, for you know and I know, that your presence here is only a foolish girl's romantic freak, but we also know that a scream from you would turn a harmless girlish prank into a tragedy for you."

The man comfortably settled his back against the tomb-stone.

"Now scream," he sighed.

Enid opened her mouth to expostulate. No words came.

She knew that she dared not scream.

Her danger from evil tongues was greater than her danger from silence.

Being feather-brained, but shrewd after all, she said after a time in a weak little voice:

"What do you wish me to do?"

Her words, however, reached the intent ear near her.

"I want you to be sure and tell me the truth."

"Yes, sir."

The entire surrender of the girl came with these two words. She was willing to make any confession now.

"What did the fortune-teller, Old Madge, tell you to do?" asked the man.

"She said that if I would take a hundred dollars and put it in an envelope, and put it in a hole in the roots of this tree, that I would get something I wanted."

"Oh?"

"Was what you wanted to be buried in the roots of the tree?"

"No."

"What was to be buried there?"

"Nothing."

"Then you don't know what this paper you have taken from the roots of the tree, where it was buried, contains?"

"No."

"But you were to put a piece of money valued at one hundred dollars in the tree?"

"Yes."

"That is in the hollow made by the decayed roots of the tree?"

"Yes."

"Then what was to happen?"

"I was to strike a match."

"Oh, that was to be a signal that you had deposited the cash?"

"I sup-pose-e so-o-o."

"What next?"

"I was then to pass out of the church gate, over there, and as I went out there was to be the name of —well, never mind."

The man snickered.

"I think I understand," he said. "You are too pretty to bother about the name of the man you are to marry, young woman. He will show up at the right time. Don't worry. You'll know the right man when he comes along."

"You mean thing."

Enid was at the point of tears.

"Now don't cry," the figure said more kindly. "Just hurry along and get somewhere."

"Is there any other humiliation you are preparing for me?"

"I preparing a humiliation? Why, girl you brewed it all for yourself. When you went to that old witch who couldn't possibly tell you anything you didn't know you told her that you were willing to be tricked, the moment you consulted her. She is a cheap fakir."

"She made me come here," cried the girl.

Then in a torrent of words she poured out the entire pitiful little story to the man.

When she told of the substitution of the one thousand dollar bill and the gold and the payment to inno-

cent Roy Jerome of the cash, the figure chuckled.

When she told of giving the thousand dollars in gold to Old Madge, the man laughed.

"Oh, you easy, easy mark!" he cried. "Don't you see that the witch 'roped' you?"

The stranger watched the mortification struggling in varied expressions over the face of the girl.

"What pretty eyes—what a very pretty young woman," the man thought. "But less good looks and more brains would be better for her."

"Let me see the hundred dollar bill, that Old Madge gave you?"

The girl handed the stranger the bill.

He turned toward the moonlight, awaited the appearance of the moon from behind a cloud, took a long look at the bill and turned toward the girl.

"Here," he said, drawing a hundred dollar bill from his pocket. "You take this bill, which will serve the purpose for which it is intended, and you put it in that envelope and you place the bill and envelope in that decayed root in the oak-tree here, as you have agreed to do."

"Yes."

"Then you go out of the gate and take the name of the man you are to marry from the bit of paper on which it will be written and when you do there is one thing for you to add to that information."

The stranger as he spoke drew a fountain-pen from his pocket.

He rapidly scrawled something upon a bit of paper he drew also from his pocket.

"You take this bit of writing and when you get the name of the man you are to be married to some day, according to information supplied by the spooks controlled by Old Madge, you take time to read this writing," the man said.

"What will it contain?"

"It will also tell the name of the man you are going to marry."

Enid gave a sobbing cry.

"Gracious? Are you also from the spirit land?"

"I am from a land of shade and mystery," the stranger replied firmly.

"There is nothing more you wish?" the girl asked.

"Yes, one thing. Write your name, and the date upon this bill. That's all."

Enid did as she was requested.

The stranger bowed.

He was gone.

Which way he left Enid did not know!

She glanced fearfully about.

She was absolutely alone.

"Goodness!" cried the girl.

She placed the bill in the root of the tree.

She lighted a match as she had been directed to do.

It blazed up fitfully and then went out.

Like a startled fawn Enid rushed, then, to the gate that gave her liberty to the high-road that led to her father's home. She fairly flew along to get rid of the haunted feeling that the church-yard engendered.

On the gate-post she saw a bit of paper.

She clutched it.

She tore it from the post.

Her flying feet rushed down the highway to her home.

In the silence of her room she read the name of her future husband as revealed by the spirts envoked by Old Madge the fortune-teller.

This was the name the girl read:

ROY JEROME.

Enid went white.

"What?" she cried.

She then read the name scrawled by the stranger she had met in the grave-yard.

This was the name that appeared before the startled girl's frightened eyes:

ROY JEROME.

"The man I passed the thousand dollar bill on—oh, no, no!" muttered the girl.

Were the spirits and the strange man whom Enid Wilson had met in the lonely grave-yard correct? Time alone could tell!

CHAPTER VI.

A FIGHT FOR FREEDOM.

The terrible situation in which he found himself, crept to Roy Jerome's mind in a revealing flash.

He saw the three men gazing at him.

Tom Godfrey stood in the foreground.

Behind him stared Old Man Wilson.

At one side near a table, on which burned a small lamp, for it was now evening, stood Owen Judd, his mouth wide open with amazement.

The constable was approaching to lay his arresting hand upon Roy.

Roy saw him dully.

In some way Roy sensed that he had been the victim of a plot.

In some way he knew Enid Wilson had victimized him. How far her complicity in the plot went, he had no means of knowing.

He knew further that he needed time in which to frame some campaign to show his innocence of guilt.

Nothing could be done, if he was confined, with a North-West Mounted police-constable watching him all the time.

In times of stress one does not take much time to think.

The brain whirls a sudden resolution along the nerves.

The nerves give impulse to the muscles; the brain-plan is carried out.

Thus it was with Roy.

The constable's arm was just settling upon Roy's shoulder, when his fist rose.

Roy struck out with the splendid force of a sinewy man in the flush of youth and health.

Whack!

The blow sounded thus as it struck the constable directly between his eyes.

The man's head struck the floor ahead of his heels.

He lay still, an insensible mass of human flesh.

Roy rushed at Tom Godfrey.

The saloon-keeper's arm was stealing down after his revolver.

Whack!

Roy's fist struck him on the point of the jaw.

Godfrey turned up his eyes like a dying cod-fish.

He curled up along side of the constable, Tim Brennan.

With a flirt of his hand in which he held his wide-sombrero Roy over turned the lamp, before Old Man Wilson could draw the gun he was fumbling for.

"See you later, Owen," yelled Roy.

The window was half open behind Owen.

Roy dashed to it, flung it open to its fullest extent, vaulted through it to the street below and after taking the mad fifteen feet plunge, darted away toward the hills and woods that led to the haunts of the Ghost of Horn Mountains.

Owen for his part silently chuckled at the prowess shown by his friend and superior in the surveying work.

"Temporarily like," Owen remarked, "my esteemed and respect-ed chief has been sent on his vacation by these prostrate gents here. I will try and revive them and find what all this sudden brawl is about."

After a time Constable Brennan sat up.

His bloody face showed that Roy was a hard-hitter.

Godfrey with both eyes draped in mourning, also sat up.

The two men, constable and saloon keeper, gazed at each other in some silence for a spell.

"Brennan," cried Godfrey, "you're a sight. My, what a bump there is on your forehead, and your nose —man, can you breathe, through it?"

The constable, being a Canadian, didn't see the joke as quickly as he should.

He closed one eye, and squinted with the other down his bloody nose.

He glanced at Godfrey.

"'People that live in glass houses ought not to throw stones'," the constable announced gravely. "If my nose is 'a sight' for the love of Moses, look at your two eyes."

Intent on keeping the comedy going Owen grabbed a hand-mirror from a bureau and slid it into Godfrey's hands.

"Great Snakes!" yelled Godfrey, "Look at my eyes! What a pair of shiners."

Every one expected Godfrey to burst into a yell of rage and to rend the skies with his oaths and promises of vengeance.

Instead he burst into an Homeric peal of laughter.

"Ho! Ho! Hee! Ho!" Godfrey roared. "What a joke! Say, Brennan, that chap, Roy Jerome, the surveyor is a hard-hitter, isn't he?"

Brennan, as good a fellow at heart as ever lived, blew up next.

When he had ceased to laugh he looked at Godfrey.

"He certain has got the punch," the constable answered. "I never had a man put me out quite so easy as has Roy Jerome—and I like him for doing it."

"So do I," cried Godfrey.

"That chap don't look to me to be guilty," went on Godfrey. "The guilty man doesn't put up his dukes and show fight. He slumps down under arrest for he knows he has got what's coming to him. This chap fought not only us but the charge we made."

"But he passed the counterfeit thousand dollar bill on you, didn't he?" asked Old Man Wilson. "You gave him good money for his bad bill?"

"I did," rejoined Godfrey. "But Roy might not have known the bill was a bogus one. He might have passed it in good faith—I wish I hadn't sworn out that warrant for Roy's arrest quite so soon. May be I'm in wrong."

Old Man Wilson sniffed.

Money was his God.

He would no more have spared Roy than he would a wild-cat had he his way.

"Well, you know best. I would have sworn out an arrest for that chap, or for any one else, even had it been my own daughter, whom I suspected of passing the bill upon me," Wilson sneered.

Owen thought it time to interfere.

He drew Godfrey aside.

"Let's talk this matter over," Owen cried.

"With all my heart," answered Tom Godfrey.

"Now then what is it all about?" asked Owen after he had gotten Tom out of ear shot of Wilson and Brennan.

"Don't you know?"

"Not exactly. Just got a glimmer of the facts."

"I've sworn out a warrant for the arrest of Roy Jerome."

"So I gathered."

"Do you know what for?"

"Not exactly."

"For passing a bad bill on me."

"What?"

"For passing a bad bill on me."

"Hum. How much was the bill for?"

"One thousand dollars."

"Phew!"

"That's it."

"Now Godfrey, don't you think that you've made a fool of yourself?"

"Eh?"

"Do you really think that Roy Jerome ever actually passed that thousand dollar bill on you knowing that it was bogus?"

"No-o, now I come to think it all over I don't think he did."

"Then why did you swear out a warrant for his arrest?"

Godfrey looked puzzled.

"Dinged if I know," he answered. "It was this way—I took the bill over to Old Man Wilson's within an hour after Roy got me to give him change for it. Wilson was in his office. I had a note coming due with the old skin-flint the next day, so I sez to myself, I'll put enough cash in the safe to run the banks in the various faro games I'm running, make change, etc., at the bar and I'll go and pay Old Man Wilson the rest, take up that two thousand dollar note he has of mine, go and buy the old woman some clothes, and then if I over-sleep tomorrow the note will be paid, and all will be settled up—you know how late the gin-mill keeps me up sometimes when business is brisk."

Owen nodded.

"I then went to Old Man Wilson, and sez I, quick like, 'Wilson cough up that note of mine. It's due tomorrow. I'll pay it off to-day.'"

"'What note, sez the old skin-flint, bloody well knowing," put in Owen.

"I see you've done biz with Wilson," rejoined Godfrey. "That's just what he did do. I skins off that thousand, makes up another thousand out o' me bank-roll, and pushes the pelf over to Wilson."

"Then what happened?"

"Ever pay Wilson any money? He looks like a tiger when it has killed its first meal in two weeks. Well, the old divil took the money. The minute he laid eyes on the bill that Roy had given me he let a howl out of him."

"What did you do?"

"'What's eatin' you?' I shouted. 'Are you gone crazy with the heat'?"

"What did Wilson do?"

"He stuck his nose up like all those money Kings do when they speak to us poor money makers. 'That's a bogus bill' he says. 'A what' sez I. 'Counterfeit' he howls. And that's the whole story."

"Oh, I see. Then the fact that the one thousand dollar bill was counterfeit came to you first from Wilson."

"Yes."

"Hum."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, I happen to know that Roy got that money from Wilson."

"No he didn't."

"How do you know?"

"He got money from Wilson's daughter. She says he did—but not the bogus bill."

"Ho! Ho!"

"Yes. He came in to the bank, Enid Wilson says, and got a draft cashed for a thousand dollars. It was drawn on the Hudson's Bay Company."

"Ah."

"The girl paid him, she says, in gold."

"Oh."

"Old Man Wilson says that there was no thousand dollar bank-bill in all the money he had on hand when he left his daughter in charge of the bank not an hour before Roy Jerome came in."

"Oh!"

"So the money didn't come from the bank, eh?"

"Hum."

"Roy, if he knew it was counterfeit, must have had it about him all the time."

"I don't believe it."

"What?"

"I think that money did come from the bank."

"Nonsense."

"Well I do."

"There's no evidence of that fact—any more than surface evidence."

"There's no evidence that you are German—except surface indications."

"What do you mean by that?"

"In your saloon you talk broken German; here you talk just as well as I do."

"Let me tell you a secret."

"Go ahead."

"It's a professional one."

"Yes."

"A jolly, broken-English-talking German, is liked by those who frequent gin-mills. Hence, it's up to me to be a jolly broken-English-talking German, while engaged in business."

"Oh?"

"Out of business hours, I'm still a German, but I don't speak broken English."

"Did you think that out of business hours, Roy might also be a non-counterfeiter? He might be something else. I don't believe, and I don't think you do either that Roy passed that bogus bill knowing it was bogus."

The saloon-keeper laughed constrainedly.

"Guess I will withdraw the warrant," he cried. "There's some mistake about this thing."

But when the good-hearted German went to explain his intention to the constable, Tom Brennan, there was a vigorous protest from Old Man Wilson.

"Compound a felony? Never," the old money lender yelled. "Why man, that's inviting counterfeiters to make bogus bank-bills. It's pulling down the bulwarks that stand between capital and poverty. No never. I myself, will swear out a warrant charging Roy Jerome with passing counterfeit money, as a citizen in the search of justice, if you dare to withdraw the one you have caused to be issued——"

"Hold on," cried Godfrey, "I won't withdraw the warrant."

"All right," winked the Constable. "I will arrest the man it calls for, Roy Jerome, right quick—when I find where he is."

"That's dead easy," cried a voice. "I will show you where he is."

All whirled around.

There stood Bad Bill Williams, the outlaw, with an evil smile on his crime stained face.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GHOST OF HORN MOUNTAINS CHORTLES.

In his first rush Roy Jerome almost lost his breath forever, when he ran into the mountain fastness to escape the warrant for his arrest upon a crime that he knew he was innocent of.

He plunged directly into a deep gulch, that he in his speed and haste had not seen rise up in his path, and went sliding down to the silence below.

"Where am I?" he thought.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!"

In chortling glee Roy heard the same fiendish, ghost-like laughter come floating down to him from a crag above his head.

Roy glanced up.

There stood the white-robed, spectral figure which had given him the warning of his impending doom.

"Beware! Beware!" the figure crooned.

Then it ran rapidly into the fastness of the mountains and disappeared.

"*The Ghost of Horn Mountains,*" whispered Roy. "*Once more she has warned me. I fear I am lost.*"

"Crack!

The explosion of a rifle searched the echoes about Roy as he whispered his dread message to himself.

A bullet came flying over his head making a whine of truculent and deadly menace as it did so.

Crack!

Again the rifle spoke.

The bullet this time sang through Roy's cap.

It just escaped passing through the upper part of his head.

"A hint from that kind of a messenger means death," cried Roy to himself. "The next time that leaden gentleman comes across this gulch he'll get me."

Roy accordingly secreted himself behind a rock.

He quickly peered around to see if he could see who had fired the shots.

For quite a space of time there was no motion anywhere, although Roy kept a careful look-out.

Then he saw the tip of a man's wide felt hat stick out from behind a great tree.

The man followed his hat by bringing his face into view.

Then Roy saw it was the fiendish, crime-stained countenance of Bad Bill Williams, the outlaw.

"That's queer," thought Roy. "Why has Bad Bill any interest in shooting me?"

Roy racked his brains in an effort so solve this mystery.

He only knew Bad Bill by sight.

To his remembrance he had never spoken to the outlaw.

"I haven't been in these parts a month," thought Roy. "I haven't had anything to do with any one only in a very friendly way. I've had no quarrels with any one. I don't know that I have an enemy in all Hangman's Gulch—yet here this outlaw is trying deliberately to assassinate me."

Roy thought the matter over.

"Men don't try to assassinate other men unless there's a cogent reason," Roy thought. "What is Bad Bill doing that he tries to murder me from ambush? How have I crossed that thug's trail—I——"

A light flashed through Roy's mind.

"This attempt to kill me by a shot out of the forest, is due to only one reason," Roy argued. "It's due to the one thousand dollar counterfeit bill. That outlaw knows something about the bogus bill. He don't want me to know what he knows, or to ever come back again to my friends. He wants me to disappear so bad that he is willing to risk his hide to murder me—Bad Bill knows something about this mystery. I'm going to follow Bad Bill."

Roy had not been surveying trackless wildernesses for nothing.

He had become an expert in woodcraft.

He was down on his hands and knees in a moment.

Like a great snake he wound hither and thither, between rocks, by trees, through the rank second timber and shrubs that grew about the bottoms of the greater and older forest trees.

Soon Roy was out of line of Bad Bill, but was now in a position much nearer to him.

"I could pump a couple of shots into Bad Bill, and end all future attempts at assassination," Roy thought. "But if I did, I would defeat the plans that have grown up in my mind in the last ten minutes. Bad Bill knows more about that thousand dollar bill than I do. He wanted me to carry the little I knew into the silent grave so that he would be safe from any one piecing what I know with what they suspect."

Bad Bill, meanwhile, was trying to get a glance at Roy.

The outlaw seemed to be pretty sure as he did not see the young surveyor make any movement that his last shot had killed the young man.

At all events Bad Bill did not go down into the canyon to see whether he had murdered Roy or not.

His actions indicated that he felt sure that he had shot the surveyor.

Bill shouldered his rifle after a long inspection from his perch of the depths below.

He then started back toward Hangman's Gulch.

Not two hundred paces behind him, shielding himself from any backward glance by dodging hither and thither, lurked Roy.

"I'll bet that fellow is going home to his fiendish Mother, Old Madge, the fortune-teller," Roy surmised.

Roy was right.

He saw the form of Bad Bill slip behind a rock, take a trail down the mountain side and disappear into the door of his witch-like mother's cabin-hut.

Roy in ten seconds was hustling down the trail.

He reached the adobe covered hut.

He listened attentively when he had stationed himself along the side of the hut.

Not a sound came from it.

He listened again, and overheard at length scraps of conversation.

It was Bad Bill and Old Madge talking, Roy felt sure.

He glued his ear to the side of the house.

He heard the entire story talked over, as to Enid Wilson's connection with the crime.

He heard the story of how she had been induced to flim-flam her father out of his gold.

He heard the precarious pair plot as to how they would get the money back when Enid went alone to the graveyard.

"I'll beat brother Bad Bill to the girl by about an hour," thought Roy. "I guess I'm not classed as a detective but I'm classy at the detective game at that."

Roy heard Bad Bill and his mother go into the cellar, and then he stole downward, making the huge bulk that was dancing on the wall, and which neither Bad Bill or Old Madge noticed.

"I've got to the bottom of Bad Bill's game," cried Roy to himself a moment after his inspection of the place where the counterfeiter manufactured his bogus money. "I'm now finding out a reason for my murder by Bad Bill. He feared I would find out his secrets, and decided to put me out of the way by sending an assassin's bullet through my head."

As carefully as he had come into the place, Roy stole out.

He was not discovered as he left the hut.

Soon he was winding his way to the church-yard, and after his extorting a confession from Enid, and his scaring her half to death, by writing the name he felt sure that Old Madge had placed in the envelope, namely his own, Roy hid himself until he saw Bad Bill come hulking along.

It was now midnight and Bill had come to get the one hundred dollar bill which he felt sure Enid would put in the oak tree in the church yard just as she had been instructed to do.

All went as Bill and Old Madge had planned.

He saw the flash of the match the girl lighted.

"Ho, ho!" laughed Bill. "She is follerin' instructions all right."

Then Bill saw Enid fly homeward.

"Ho! Ho!" Bill almost screamed. "Was there ever a better put up game?"

Bill slouched over to the grave yard gate.

He held the fluttering envelope that Enid had put in the tree as she dashed past it, intent on her wish to keep her bargain with the spirits Old Madge had invoked for her sake.

Bill's clumsy fingers searched the envelope.

In it he found a hundred dollar bill.

"Ho! Ho!" the outlaw almost screamed. "The gal fell fer it. Here's me hundred dollars bogus bill back ergin. That gal owes me mother a hundred. We've got the one thousand dollar bill worked off, the bogus one. We have a thousand dollars in good old gold cached away, Bill, old sport. Now we come over with the hundred thet gal had of ourn. We kin pass that over again. Ho! Ho! Ho!"

"Ho! Ho! Ho!"

A screaming voice shrieked these words almost in Bill's ears as he laughed in fiendish glee.

A white shape came rushing at him.

Bill tried to draw his weapons.

It was too late.

Something in the hand of the ghost-like presence hit Bad Bill a terrible blow on his head.

With a grunt the outlaw fell forward on his face.

He had not sunk to the ground when Roy Jerome darted to his side.

He abstracted the counterfeit hundred dollar bill from the outlaw's pocket and vanished into the bushes.

Above him shrieked and wailed on the steep mountain side the phantom form of the wraith-like creature.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROY TALKS IT OVER.

A few hours later, Owen Judd in answer to a message sent by Roy Jerome through Moosejaw, an Indian hunter, met the surveyor in a secret spot in the Horn Mountains.

"Fine lot of trouble we are all in," remarked Owen as soon as he greeted his chief.

"Aren't we?" smiled Roy. "But it might be worse."

"Couldn't be, could it?"

"Yes, very much worse."

"How?"

"Because I might be in jail."

"Instead of lying out here like an outlaw. Well I don't know which I'd rather not do."

"It is pretty tough."

"It isn't half as tough as you look."

"Do I look tough?"

"My! you're a fright."

"Am I?"

"You need a shave."

"I need a hair cut."

"You need a bath. You need a lot of things to keep you from looking like a confounded pirate."

Roy laughed.

"Well, I'll get them all when I get my innocence established."

"Any chance of that?"

"Yes."

"Good."

"How's the surveying gang?"

"Doing finely."

"Are they really?"

"Excellently."

"Good."

"You know why don't you? I'm a better boss than you are."

Roy grinned.

"Glad to hear it," he remarked.

"Knew you would be," rejoined Owen.

The two men gazed over the mountains in silence.

"When do you propose getting back to civilization and cease being an outlaw?" inquired Owen at length.

"Before long! Say, man, how can I come back to Hangman's Gulch? If I do I will be arrested."

"You bet you will."

"Is Godfrey still angry?"

"Not a bit."

"Who is?"

"Old Man Wilson."

"What?"

"Yes, the old skin-flint is up in arms. You see when he come to count up his cash the day after the little drama in which you knocked out two men, he found that you had cashed a draft on the Hudson's Bay Company for that one thousand. His daughter says she paid you in gold."

"She is a——did she really say that?"

"Yes."

"Well, as he paid out the thousand dollars in gold, and the claim is made by Godfrey that you weren't paid in gold but in the bogus bill, so Godfrey holds Old Man Wilson for the bogus bill. Wilson swears that he won't pay up. Godfrey has sent a letter to the Hudson's Bay Company asking them not to pay the draft until there is a settlement—and there you are. A regular financial stew."

"What does Enid say?"

"Rolls up her lovely blue eyes, swears she paid you in gold, and now, without lying out here an outlaw in fact if not in intent, things are all in a pretty pickle."

"Funny game, isn't it?" calmly replied Roy. "So Enid insists that she paid me in gold."

"Yep."

"Says she is sure of it?"

"Yep. Says there wasn't any bill of a thousand dollars denomination in the safe. Says there was thirteen hundred and sixty-five dollars and eight cents in the safe in gold and in smaller coin, and about a hundred and fifty in greenbacks. She says she gave you one thousand dollars in gold."

"She does, eh?"

"Yes. She adds that as the rest of the money as she describes it was found intact, when her father returned, save the thousand dollars which she had paid you, she must be correct in her statement."

"What does her father say?"

"Corroborates her to a whisper."

"Father and daughter agree on one point that they had the cash as each describe it on hand when you called. You certainly got a draft cashed and got a thousand dollars for it."

"Sure I did."

"Godfrey claims that you were given the one thousand dollar bill by Enid. He says she is lying."

"Oh discerning Godfrey."

"Wilson says he knows his daughter is telling the truth."

"What does Enid say?"

"Rolls up those adorable eyes and then asks me about you."

"Asks about me?"

"Yes. She is extremely solicitous as to where you are."

"How sweet of her. Isn't it nice to be the center of a pretty girl's thoughts."

"Well, I'll pass another counterfeit bill for a thousand if the action will make Enid Wilson write me a note."

It was time now for Roy to look amazed.

He was there with the amazement stare on scheduled time.

"How—Enid write to me?" he questioned.

"She did."

"When?"

"Last night."

"Have you got the letter with you?"

"I have."

"Would you mind delivering it?"

"I hate to do it. I'd rather Enid wrote it to me than to you."

"Quit fooling. Produce the letter."

"The young girl ought to be ashamed of herself to write to a bandit."

"Give me the letter, will you?"

"It's a shame that any girl writes to a man who like you is a candidate for states prison and——"

Roy dashed at Owen, held him firmly, abstracted the letter while Owen laughed and sat down on a near by tree stump.

"I see you have added highway robbery to your other crimes."

Roy read Enid's letter.

"Do you know what this letter contains?" he asked of Owen.

"Judging from the long lines of heavily underscored writing upon yonder clean letter paper, writ in the usual hodge-poge manner in which a young lady now days asks her friends to mazely thread to find out what she is writing about, I should judge that your letter contains—words."

"Oh. So you think this letter contains written words?"

"I do."

"These words ask that Enid Wilson may have the honor of a short personal talk with me?"

"Luring you to your doom?"

"No, I think not. She says she has news to tell me and wants to see me."

"All right! When shall I escort her out here?"

"How do I know I want to have her come out to talk with me?"

"I don't know what you want but I know what you are going to do."

"What am I going to do?"

"Instruct me to bring Enid out here as soon as I can?"

Roy grinned sheepishly.

"I guess you're a mind reader, eh?" he asserted.

"Never any one better," replied Owen.

"All right then. If you can get Enid out here to see me without exciting suspicion, do it."

"Man, it's all arranged. Don't you suppose a pretty girl like Enid would attract a man like Roy Jerome, much as a a honey-tub does a fly?"

"Is this a statement of fact, or merely a statement of intention and suspicion?"

"Figure it out yourself, old chap. But as soon as

Enid gave me that letter I twigged what she had written. So I gave her the first-aid-to-injured-hearts-treatment, lesson—No. I."

"Huh?"

"I invited her to take a horse-back ride with me tomorrow."

"Well?"

"Enid is no feather-headed chippie, as you often said, you know. She is a pretty bright girl."

"I never said she was 'a feather-headed chippie.'"

"Well, never mind. Anyway she gave me just one quick look, tumbled and accepted my invitation."

"She did, eh?"

"Yes. Knowing full well that I would lead her to you—shut up now, get your romance language going. You have everything in your favor. Go ahead and marry the girl. You're being per-se-cuted by a myster-ious per-son! She will therefore invest you with a romantic halo and well—invite me to the wedding."

Jerome smiled grimly.

"I will," he said. "When there's a wedding."

"I've got another bit of news for you."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"After you flew the hotel coop so briefly and suddenly the other day, when the constable came to arrest you, I talked things over with Godfrey."

"Then what did Godfrey say?"

"I got him all calmed down. He didn't want to raise any more of a rumpus for you when your to be father-in-law slopped over."

"You seem to take it all for granted," cried Roy. "You mean Old Man Wilson—say what is Old Man Wilson's front name?"

"I dunno. No one seems to know. Say, he has forgotten it himself I guess. They say he signs his checks now 'Old Man Wilson.' Honest!"

"Well, anyway tell me about the rumpus he created—this 'to be dad-in-law of mine.'"

"I had got Godfrey calmed down when this man chips in, this Wilson. He wouldn't hear to a withdrawal of the warrant."

"He wouldn't?"

"No. He said if Godfrey withdrew the one he had sworn out, he would be sure and go and swear one out himself."

"Ah."

"While we were talking there was a big roaring voice broke in."

"Who belonged to the roaring voice?"

"Bill Williams."

"Do you mean Bad Bill, the outlaw?"

"I do."

"What was he butting in for?"

"He offered to sell us the facts as to where you were hiding."

Roy turned red.

Then he turned pale.

All the time he swore in a most bitter way.

The things he said about Bad Bill would stop a clock.

"So Bill wanted to sell me out?" he finally cried.

"Dead anxious to do it."

"I won't forget that. See?"

"I'll see. But what do you propose to do?"

"I'm going to stay out here for awhile."

"Like the outlaw game?"

"There's worse games; hearing you knock for instance."

Owen laughed.

"Guess you're right. Well, so long. I'll bring the fair 'loidy' along with me next trip. Treat her kindly. She's too pretty not to."

Owen ducked, and just escaped the rock that Roy sent whistling at his head.

"So long, Roy," he cried a moment later. "You make the dandy outlaw. But get shaved before you see the 'loidy' in the case tomorrow."

Roy watched Owen until he had clambered far down the trail.

After that Roy stood lost in thought for a long time.

Then he shouldered his rifle.

"I wonder what Enid Wilson wants to see me about," he thought. "It must be extremely important or she would not have written as she did."

Roy took the note the girl had sent him out of his pocket. He read it long and carefully.

> "Dear Mr. Jerome," the letter said. "I must see you on an extremely important matter. I may almost say that the matter is one of such importance that I am willing to take any risk to see you! Mr. Judd says that if I go riding with him tomorrow that I will be rewarded by a sight of you. So expect me tomorrow——
>
> Sincerely yours,
> ENID WILSON."

"I wonder if that girl is going—Well, I must wait and see," muttered Roy as he swung his rifle further over his shoulder and started away up the trail that led to the deeper canyons of Horn Mountains.

CHAPTER IX.

BAD BILL'S BAD HOUR.

With a groan Bad Bill Williams, the outlaw and counterfeiter, came to himself.

His sodden eyes took in the landscape first from the flat part of his back.

Had not the vicinity of Hangman's Gulch been very mountainous this would have been impossible.

As it was Bad Bill saw the tops of the mountains only imperfectly.

In fact he saw a tiny portion of the tops.

Later when Bill sat up he saw more of them. They swung about so dizzily that Bill covered his eyes with his hands to shut out the sight.

A mountain so undignified as to attempt to stand on its head is a sight no man likes to look upon.

Bill next felt of his head.

"Someone hit me!" the bully cried.

This was not an observation that one could carp at.

A bump on any man's head even though it be on the head of a thug, and outlaw is sufficient to give reason for the surmise that someone had put the bump there

with a weapon more or less deadly.

"Oh, I remember," thought Bill. "A ghost-like figure came racing at me. It was——"

Bill's face was white and drawn as he finished his thoughts.

"The Ghost of Horn Mountains hit me, all right. Will I never get rid of that spectre—oh, well, never mind. I can escape my fate."

The remark in itself would indicate that Bad Bill had some knowledge of the apparition.

Bill felt the bump on his head.

He broke out into many horrid oaths.

"I've been shot," he yelled again.

This again showed the depth of Bill's reflections but added new light to his first query, "Someone has hit me?"

Bill searched his pockets.

When he found that the one hundred dollars he had taken from the envelope left by Enid at the graveyard had been filched from him the atmosphere almost seemed to turn blue, and green, while there must have been a strong sulphurous smell brought forth by his words.

"Robbed!" howled Bill. "Robbed by—— —— ——. If I had the —— —— I'd tear his eyes out of his head. I'd eat him up. I'd —— ——."

The things Bill would do weren't fit for eyes or ears polite.

It was a trailing volcano of wrath that burst into Old Madge's hut half an hour later.

"Who hit you, Billy boy?" cried Old Madge.

"Do you suppose he would be alive if I knew?" howled her son. "You shut up and get me something to take the swelling down."

"Haven't you any idea who hit you?"

"Not a bit. I was just congratulating my stars over the easy way we had got this game rigged up, and had just put my hand in my pocket to feel the bogus one hundred dollar bill, when I went down and out."

"Didn't you hear something just before you fell, Billy boy?"

"I did."

"What was it?"

"The screaming laughter of——"

"Stop."

Old Madge caught her son by his arm.

Her averted eyes slowly travelled to her son's face.

He in turn lifted his eyes to those of his mother.

In answer to the mute question Bad Bill nodded his head in a single gesture signifying "yes."

Old Madge burst into a cry.

"I knew it," she wailed. "The curse. I knew it, Billy boy, when I first saw your face."

Bad Bill stood with a look of sullen rage on his face.

"If I thought so," Bill said in a strangled tone of hate. "I'd——"

"Not that Billy boy. Oh, not that," rejoined Old Madge. "Leave it all to time. Billy boy time works out many puzzles that we can't solve at first. He is the great leveller. Death is greater, but he is indeed great."

The mother and son seemed to be soon lost in painful forebodings.

The mother spoke first.

"What shall we do now?" she whispered.

"I dunno."

"Can we stay here?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Where shall we go to?"

"I dunno."

"Have you made any plans?"

"None."

"Do you know who is at the bottom of this mystery?"

"No. If I did I'd kill him."

"That would do you no good. They'd come and kill you as they did your poor father."

"Perhaps."

"Well, there's one thing sure."

"What is that?"

"We must hurry off all our shipments of the queer stuff, and get the plate-press dismantled and buried somewhere in the woods."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"I think so."

"What makes you think so?"

"Don't you see that I was knocked down and robbed?"

"Yes."

"I wasn't knocked down and robbed by the same mysterious force."

"You don't mean it."

"I do."

"The blow came from one source. The robbery from another."

"Oh Billy!"

"The man, for I feel sure that it was a man that robbed me, will try and spend that one hundred dollars if it was a thief."

"Yes."

"He will be caught at once and charged with trying to 'shove the queer.'"

"Well?"

"To save his own neck he will plead guilty to highway robbery."

"Oh?"

"He will rather take a term in prison for highway robbery than for passing counterfeit money."

"Of course. There's years difference in terms to serve between the two crimes. He would confess to highway robbery to escape a conviction for issuing counterfeit money. So would either of us."

"Well, then he will have to confess that he stole the bogus bill off me when I'd been knocked out by the—ghost."

Old Madge fairly howled her grief.

"Then there's another horn to think about."

"What is that?"

"Suppose it was an honest man that saw Bad Bill knocked out. Bad Bill hasn't the best reputation in the world in this hamlet or through the North-West territory."

"That's true. You will shoot so quick when you are drunk."

"Never mind that, you old hellion. What if I do?"

"Oh nothing, Billy boy."

"Now suppose this honest man took that bogus bill to that infernal Royal North-West Mounted Police constable that's hanging around these diggings pretending he is after that feller Roy Jerome—then what would happen?"

"You would be arrested and shut up quick."

"You bet."

The gloomy thoughts of Bill could be seen on his face.

"Anyway we are dead up against it. That bill stolen from my pocket will be my undoing. I'm going to get mine no matter which way I turn. Thunder!"

Behind this mild word lurked others.

Bad Bill was thoroughly exhausted and foaming at the mouth like a mad dog when he had got the last word out of his system.

"You see where we are?"

Old Madge nodded in alarm.

"Well, there's the story."

Bill subsided.

He pulled his favorite bottle toward him and indulged in a great drink of "red likker."

"Not much of that Billy" cried his mother, "that stuff never drowned a sorrow yet, but it's drowned many a hope."

Bill snarled.

He took another drink.

"Mother," Bill yelled, "this is the end of Bad Bill."

"Nonsense," the crone soothed, "don't give up yet."

"They've got my alley," the outlaw howled, as the liquor began to take effect. "I'm down and out."

While Bad Bill sat bemoaning his fate, he little knew that the bogus bill he thought he had been robbed of never had been in his possession since the day he handed it to his mother to give to Enid Wilson.

The bill had never left Enid's possession until after she had been almost forced to give it to Roy Jerome.

Therefore Bad Bill had never a "look in" for the bill.

What he had taken from his pocket was the perfectly good bill substitute for his bogus one by Roy.

But there was one thing that Bill was right in. His career was drawing rapidly to a close, not only in Hangman's Gulch, but in the world.

Possibly that was why he said to his mother as he staggered off to bed——

"Mother yar a (hic) prettish good old sort. Shee?"

For an hour Old Madge stood staring at the door through which her only son had vanished.

It was the first kind thought he had had for her since he was a boy lisping his prayers at her knee.

That was—oh, a long, long ago story.

Old Madge had not made a prayer in many years.

As for Bad Bill——

"I fear my boy is going to die," the hag-like woman finally whispered.

She buried her face in her hands and burst into convulsive weeping.

"Dead? Dying! My Bill, dying! Why did he die. Oh why did he die?"

With these strange words upon her lips for Bill was not yet dead as his snores could be plainly heard as he slumbered in drunken content, Old Madge herself passed into the oblivion that sleep gives.

CHAPTER X.

ENID WILSON TELLS HER STORY.

"Are you sure of what you are telling me?"

The words were spoken by Roy Jerome.

He was looking with a tender glance into the great blue eyes of the girl.

She in turn was all eyes for the sturdy young surveyor.

Romantic, pretty, foolish Enid Wilson had met her fate at last.

And Jerome, being young, did not look upon the girl's little episode which had made him an outlaw, and under suspicion of a grave crime, with as stern a view as probably he would have done had Enid not been quite so distractingly good looking.

"I am absolutely sure."

"You saw Bad Bill talking to your father?"

"Yes."

"Where were they during the conversation?"

"In father's office."

"Ah."

"Bad Bill at first was doing all the talking."

"He was?"

"Yes."

"Did you hear what they said?"

"I did, partly."

"What did they say?"

"They were talking about you."

"About me?"

"They were."

"What did they say?"

"I heard Bill say he knew where you could be found."

"What did your father say?"

"I couldn't exactly understand."

"Sure?"

"Absolutely."

"Then you are at a loss to know what Bill said."

"Not exactly."

"That means that you heard something of what he said?"

"It does."

"What did he say?"

"He said that while he couldn't agree to bring you back alive that he would bring you back——"

"Meaning that he felt surer of bringing me back dead than alive."

"That was the construction I put upon what I heard."

Roy smiled.

"Why do you smile?"

"At my thoughts."

"What were they? Isn't this grave enough not to smile about?"

"Assuredly. But you see I'm smiling at our catlike Bad Bill, the outlaw."

"You are. Why pray?"

"Because not twenty-four hours away Bill took a pot-shot at me from the bushes."

"He did? Oh, Roy——"

A small white hand was extended with an involuntary motion toward the young man.

Roy grasped the hand with alacrity and also a firm grip.

Enid colored but Roy only laughed.

"This is quite comfortable," he remarked. "Now my dear, go on with your story."

Enid smiled.

"It's not my story now," she said archly. "It's your story. You have learned all I know."

Roy accordingly continued.

But he did not let go the girl's hand.

"You see Bad Bill tried to murder me by shooting me with his rifle," Roy went on.

This caused another impulsive forward movement of the girl which was followed by a "please don't," and a resounding smack.

"Any way, don't get killed. You see your life is valuable," cried Enid some moments later. "Now tell me the story, Roy, and tell it connectedly without any of these er—side issues."

Roy went on.

"Bad Bill felt sure that he had assassinated me. I have kept out of his way and have tried not to have the slightest vestige left to tell where I was hiding so that he could not know that I was alive."

"Except to torture a poor girl in a lonely grave-yard."

"What?"

"That is what I said."

"You knew me to be the stranger that met you in the grave-yard?"

"Why you foolish man, I knew you at once."

"Enid," cried Roy. "You are the most fascinating little liar I ever met."

But there was one sure thing.

Enid never did admit that she had not known Roy from the first moment she saw him in the church-yard.

Which shows that she was consistent at least.

"But to revert to your father," added Roy after a while.

"Father is pretty hard I fear. He knew that you—that is he really thinks that you tried to cheat him out of one thousand dollars' worth of his beloved money, and he would do anything but pay out some of his cash, to bring you to what he called justice."

"What a sweet father-in-law he is going to be."

"Isn't he?"

"Well, was there a bribe offered for the return of poor old me, alive or dead?"

"There was."

"What did father-in-law value me at?"

"One thousand dollars."

"Gosh!"

"Why do you say that?"

"Our father of Hangman's Gulch certain has got a grudge against me."

"He has."

"Why child, I didn't think he would give up a thousand dollars to see an earthquake much less to have me arrested."

"Nor I. Father wouldn't give up to keep me out of jail."

"Well, in this case I'm not dead and I'm not going to be dragged before your dad by Bad Bill alive, so I guess we won't worry about the loss of that cash. We don't want pap-in-law to blow in any cash. When he gets through with it we won't use it, now will we?"

"We won't horde it the way dad has, at that."

Both smiled.

"Well, there's one thing I'm glad you came out here for?"

"Why?"

"It's proved to me that you didn't really mean any harm by your fool consorting with Old Madge."

"Of course I didn't mean any harm."

"That goes without saying."

"You see young man, I wanted to be sure that Roy Jerome was the man I wanted to marry."

"It is of course."

"It is, I don't know about of course."

"Well, as a future hubby it seems to be my fate to pull you out of the scrape your husband-hunting has placed you in."

"Husband-hunting the idea—I don't have to hunt for a husband. I only consulted Old Madge to confirm a suspicion I had."

"What was the suspicion?"

"I decline to say."

"But you must."

"If you use your manly power of persuasion I shall have to speak."

"Consider that it's used."

"Well then, I wanted to know if you, young man, was the right suspicion."

"Was I?"

"How many times do you want me to tell you?"

"What a sentimental young person I'm getting to be?"

"Did you say getting?"

"I did."

"You made an error."

"Why?"

"You should not have said getting, but you should have said 'what a sentimental person I am.'"

"Thank you."

"You are welcome."

The two happy youngsters again laughed.

"But then," added Roy. "We have got to keep you out of this game."

"How?"

"I don't see yet. We must make some plan."

"I don't know what to do. You know I got you into this trouble when I gave you that bogus bill."

"Which you did not know was bogus."

"Of course not."

"That hag fooled you as she did me."

"She did."

"But even if we were fooled there may be a way out."

"I can't think of one."

"Neither can I on the spur of the moment."

"We might raid the den of Bad Bill and Old Madge."

"But that wouldn't clear up the matter of the bogus bill."

"It would go a good ways."

"How?"

"By showing that the bill was made by Bad Bill and his hag-like Mother."

"That would be easy. But it would not prove how or why Enid Wilson tapped her father's safe of the sum of one thousand dollars, to aid a game the two counterfeiters put up on her."

"Again that is true."

"It all looks pretty black to me."

"It does to me also."

"Well, the only thing for you to do is to hurry home."

"I suppose so."

"When you reach home keep a close watch for me. Notify me as quickly as anything happens."

"Certainly."

"In the meantime I will take up a plan I have which may solve all the matters vexing me."

"Good."

"Here, here," cried the voice of Owen.

Now what *could* have happened to cause Owen to say those words?

CHAPTER XI.

BAD BILL PLOTS.

Bad Bill chuckled wildly as he crawled out of the bushes not ten feet away from where Enid and Roy had been talking.

The outlaw's face was wreathed in smiles.

"What do ye think of that?" he cried to a tall tree near him. "Lovers! Ho! Ho! Goin' to get married! Peaches and cream! W-o-w! Talk about mushy-mushy and lovey-dovey game. Aw! You make me sick."

Bad Bill shook his huge hairy fist at the back of the unconscious Roy who was only a few feet away still, but who was rapidly disappearing into the distance.

"They know all about my plant, eh? They know all about my attempt at shootin' up that yaller dog, Roy Jerome? They know everything. Well, let's see who knows the most in the end."

Bad Bill rubbed his hands with glee.

He felt that he had the enemy in his power.

"Why, the chumps! They can't prove nuttin' on me. The plate-press is securely buried in the woods. There ain't no sign of bogus biz around Old Madge's hut. The game is mine."

Thus speaking the outlaw chuckled.

"The girl dassen't give up the story about gettin' the thousand dollar bill from me. If she did it would be her story agin mine and mother's. We ain't the best witnesses on earth but she couldn't prove her story and if she told it the way it really happened no one would believe her."

The outlaw laughed to himself as he cogitated.

"Then again if Enid snitches (tells), her dad will cut her off without a cent. I can crush these people any minute I want to now. They can't make good without me. They can't touch me the way the cards hang. I'm in it any old way. Well, Well! Was there ever such luck!"

The outlaw laughed again and again. His joy was wonderful in the uncouth antics he cut.

Then he thought of another phase.

"Guess I'll hurry back to the old woman. She's pretty cute. We will have a family pow-wow over this."

When the outlaw had reached his home he found Old Madge ready to turn the powers of her keen mind upon the problem as he presented it.

Madge was a bright woman. She had lived so long upon her wits that they had been well sharpened with their contact with adversity.

"Well, Billy boy," Old Madge said, "seems to me you can do them people up hands down."

"That's the talk mother."

"You've got 'em, Billy."

"Ain't I?"

"You can keep 'em goin' for years."

"Ain't that fine?"

"So far as Roy Jerome is concerned he won't dare ever to come back to these parts as long as you're on earth."

"Wow! Ain't that great? Bad Bill the Bandit, will drive Roy Jerome the swell surveyor out of the North-West country."

"As to the girl she will maybe join him some day outside of the North-West."

"What do we care about that?"

"But I don't think she will."

"Why not?"

"She's a mushy, vain, silly girl. Just now she thinks she wants to marry Roy. If she ain't married to him quick some other chap will come along that she will be just as well satisfied with."

"Guess you're right."

"Of course I am."

Old Madge thought a great deal over the problem, while her son sat and watched her.

She was so deeply in thought that Billy finally had to nudge her to attract her attention.

"Billy boy," she then said, "I've got an idea."

"It's a good one, Mother, if you have it."

Old Madge looked her delight.

This was the second nice thing that her dearly loved, worthless, criminal son had ever said to her.

"I think the idea is a good one."

"Tell it, Mother."

"I've got to have you answer some questions of mine before I do tell it Billy."

"Go ahead and ask them."

"Have you got anything against this Roy Jerome?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Is there a blood feud between you, that nothing but his or your death can wipe out?"

"Naw! I ain't got nothin' agin the young chap, 'cept to have him keep off my corns."

"That's good. All you want is have him keep off our counterfeiting game, eh?"

"That's all."

"Got anything against the girl, Enid Wilson?"

"Naw. She's a feather-brained, pretty girl, with not an ounce of sense or she wouldn't have fallen to your dope."

"I don't know Billy boy. You'd be surprised if you knew the smart people in this world that really believe in me. Faith in the spirits, and that man can come back to this earth after death is one that appeals to many bright minds."

"Do you think that the dead can rise?"

"Billy, I've been a fortune-teller, a spiritualistic trance medium, and a clairvoyant for years—all I can say is that I never saw a spirit. I never brought back the ghost of a dead man or woman, but there's people that say they have in my line. Billy boy, I can only say that I don't know whether the dead come back to this earth or not."

"There's one ghost I know of that——"

"Hush-h-h. Don't speak so loud."

Old Madge was without question terror stricken.

Bill on his part was equally silent and white.

"That's a ghost we have raised anyway, for ourselves," Bad Bill said in a low tone.

"You mean *The Ghost of Horn Mountains?*" his mother said softly.

Bad Bill with a white face, nodded.

"Shake off that feeling. It won't do no good," cried Old Madge. "You ain't the first man that's been haunted by a ghost of a woman."

"I suppose that's so."

"And there's many a woman to-day who is being haunted by the ghost of a man," added Old Madge with a leer.

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" roared Bill, "Mother you're all right. You'd hearten up any feller when he's down and out."

Old Madge flushed.

A third compliment from her son.

"He ain't goin' to live long," she thought. "My boy ain't for this world much longer. When a man like him gits decent to his mother he's most all gone. I'd not be surprised to see him drop dead before my eyes, right now."

Old Madge, however, at length said that she would present her plan to Bad Bill, and if it was a good one that he could adopt it.

"It's this way," she said. "Seein' as you have no kick coming against either that feller, Roy Jerome or the girl, Enid Wilson, why don't you compromise?"

"Wot's that? Shoot 'em up?" growled Bad Bill.

"I should say not."

"Then wot does it mean?"

"To adjust by mutual concessions."

Bad Bill looked suspiciously at his mother.

"That lingo is above me."

"Well, then," laughed Old Madge. "It means to 'get together.' It means to stand pat. That is to divide up the swag so that all will get a piece and no one be the wiser. See?"

"Oh-h-h."

Bill's eyes and mouth were wide open with admiration.

"You mean we hold a pow-wow?"

"Yes."

"Me, Jerome and the gal?"

"Yes."

"We fixes it all right between us?"

"Yes."

"They won't squeal on me, and I won't squeal on them?"

"Yes."

"Then I goes my way?"

"Yes."

"There's to be nuttin' doin' against me?"

"Yes."

"An' I'm to do nuttin' against them?"

"Right you are."

Bill studied a moment.

"Mother that's a darned good game," he ejaculated.

"Isn't it?"

"There's only one flaw in it for me."

"What's that?"

"I don't see that it brings any cash over."

Old Madge shrugged her shoulders.

"There might be some cash after a bit. I'd hold off till Roy and Enid were married."

"Well?"

"Then I'd kinder hint that would cost a little something to have me forget all I knew. I'd kept quiet to show my good will, but times were hard, and being hard, why, there——"

Bad Bill nodded.

"That's enough," he replied, "I see. But that's slow money. I am looking for quick cash. You see we can't shove any more queer out for awhile and we haven't got no way of living."

"You have that thousand in gold?"

"No I haven't. I've spent half of it."

"Well five hundred out here will last some time?"

"Why I'd drink that up in two months."

"Then why not go to work?"

Bill bounded from his chair in high rage.

He opened his mouth to swear roundly at his mother.

But words did not come.

He gasped.

He spoke at length with an effort and in a weak tone.

"Do you mean what you say?"

"Yes, Billy boy."

"You mean I'd better go to work?"

"Yes."

"No mother! I never did a day's work in an honest way in my life. I've worked very hard day after day to pull over a dishonest trick. But never to pull over an honest one."

"Bill," said Old Madge, "don't you see there's nothing in this dishonest game? You work twice as hard to make a counterfeit bill as you do to earn an honest one. There's more fun in spending an honest dollar than there is a dirty one, Billy boy, whether you make the dirty dollar in a counterfeiter's den, or in some of the so-called honest ways of the world's commerce."

Again Bill stared.

"If you don't talk like a preacher," Bill replied lamely, "I'll eat my hat. Why mother, you haven't ever earned a decent dollar—say, you're off your feed. Go get a ball. You had better see an alienist! You're sure a subject for the crazy-house."

Old Madge laughed.

"It's funny to hear the old crone, the hag-like Old Madge preach the doctrine of 'be good.' But Billy boy, I just want you to take this tip from your old mother; there's nothing in being crooked in business. There's nothing in a life of crime, but a hunted existence and a sweet little grave in your prime. Nit! This criminal life isn't to be thought about for a minute. For when ye gits in it once, Billy boy, there's no gettin' out."

"Well, I ain't a goin' to git out of it. It's a short life and a merry one," replied Bill. "But as I said before your plan's a good one, but it doesn't pay any dust right quick. My plan's a better one."

"Well, what is it?"

"I'm going to go and see Old Man Wilson."

"Eh? What for?"

"I'm going to see if he will make a deal with me."

"Oh."

"I want him to 'do business' with me on a strictly cash basis."

"Ah."

"I'm going to tell him all I know about his pretty daughter meeting Roy Jerome, providin' he will 'give up' some of the honest money you are talking about. See?"

Old Madge thought deeply.

"Suppose Old Man Wilson won't fall for your story?"

"Then I'll dicker with Roy and Enid."

"It's blackmail, Billy boy, be careful," cried Old Madge. "Don't get caught. If you do it's a prison cell for you, and a long term to serve. The penalty of attempted blackmail isn't pleasant to think about."

"Woman you're crazy," yelled Bill. "This ain't no blackmail."

"What is it then?"

"Addition, division, and silence," roared Bill as he left the house to see Old Man Wilson.

CHAPTER XII.

A DEAL FOR BLOOD.

"What? You lie, you skunk. You lie!"

This was the manner in which Old Man Wilson took the news that Bad Bill Williams, the outlaw, told him, after they had "come together" to the tune of one thousand dollars.

"Cruel words ain't goin' to help things," sneered Bill.

His hand toyed with his revolver.

Old Man Wilson saw the motion.

"You haven't got spunk enough to shoot, Bill," he cried. "Perhaps I was hasty in my language. Pardon a father's anger."

"All right! But how about the cash? Will you pay up?" Bad Bill cried.

"Wait a bit. Let's get to the bottom of this thing."

"All right, if you want to delay the game, go ahead."

"Do you know that you are right?"

"Sartin."

"You saw my daughter talking to Roy Jerome?"

"Yep."

"He was later seen to kiss her?"

"Yep. And he hugged her good too."

"The villain!"

"I don't know about that. She's a fine lookin' gal. A man usually hugs and kisses the gal he's going to marry. If he didn't she probably wouldn't marry him."

A gleam of the long dead romance of Old Wilson's life, when he married Enid's mother crept into the miser's eyes.

"I expect my daughter to marry," cried Old Man Wilson. "I expect her to ahem—kiss the man she is going to marry, and to—ahem—but we will let that phase of this affair sink into—ah—oblivion. What I don't want my daughter to do is to compromise herself with this convict-to-be; this counterfeiter."

"I see."

"And as for marrying him she must not do it. She can not throw herself away like that. Why man, she will be a very rich girl when I die. Think what a position she would occupy if she was to marry this man, who undoubtedly has passed a counterfeit thousand dollar bill and for whom a warrant has been sworn out by the man he swindled."

Bill chuckled.

"What are you grinning about?"

"If you leave your daughter a heap of money, and if she marries Roy Jerome, and still has the heap of money——"

"Yes?"

"There's a whole lot of people who consider themselves leaders of society that won't care where she got the money, as long as she got it."

"Yes."

"And there's a whole lot of people in this world who think they are cream cheese who wouldn't care if the husband of such a rich gal as you say your daughter will be, had passed seven million counterfeit bills—what?"

Old Man Wilson made a wry face.

"The kind of people that will condone that sort of thing, I don't want to know," he said, "and I don't propose that my daughter, while I'm alive or after I'm dead can get in that kind of a set. See?"

"That's right. You're like most men. You want to run things for your heirs after you are dead. I never thought much of stickin' a dead hand out o' the grave to tell a man's wife and daughter how they ought to live. The dead ought to flock, now, by themselves; the livin' by themselves. And no dead man ought to try and run the business o' the livin'."

Old Man Wilson flushed.

"You are trying to read me a lesson," he cried.

"Not a bit. Ye asked me for my views. You've got 'em. I'm just a mere outlaw, a bad-man, a gunfighter, a crook, but I've got common sense. You rich people always did make me weary."

"Well, we won't argue that question. What I want to know is, that you will keep your promise."

"You mean my promise to prevent this mad marriage?"

"I do."

"I'll guarantee to prevent it if you put up that thousand you promised me a little while ago if I would tell you all."

"How can I be sure that you will keep your word?"

"I can't be sure that I'll keep it myself except one way."

"How's that?"

Bad Bill took Old Man Wilson's walking cane which stood near at hand and raised it as he would a rifle.

Bill appeared to take careful and deadly aim at something far away.

"Click," said Bill.

Then he smiled grimly at Wilson.

"You see?" Bad Bill cried.

Wilson "saw."

He made a grimace.

He came nearer to Bill.

"I want you to prevent that marriage at all costs," Wilson hissed. *"But I won't risk my neck by inciting you to commit murder."*

"Don't let that worry you. I took two shots at this chap Roy Jerome from the bushes a spell ago. I thought sure I'd killed him. But he seems to bear a charmed life. If I go after him again I'll git him, beau. Don't you think that I won't."

"When you have got—I mean when I'm convinced that the marriage will not and can not take place, then I'll pay you the thousand dollars willingly."

Bad Bill snorted.

"Nothin' doin' that way," he cried. "You put up seven-fifty in gold before I pulls a trigger. The rest up to one Thou' is to come my way as soon as Roy Jerome is down and out."

"How can I trust you?"

"You've got to. You can't arrange to assassinate a man the way you do to advance money of yourn to some chap, on a mortgage."

"Ah?"

"You've got to stop bankin' methods and take a chanst. I've been takin' of 'em for years."

Wilson knew that Bad Bill was telling him the truth. He knew it wouldn't do to urge the putting off of the partial payment of cash with Bill.

Bill he saw would not move unless the money was forthcoming at least in part.

Wilson knew his daughter Enid.

He knew that she was like her mother, "set" in her ways.

He felt that an argument with her to forego her intention of marrying Roy would do no good.

He knew also that the girl would not for one second care whether she was disinherited or not.

Willing away his money to another would make no difference to the girl for she would marry Roy just the same.

The father knew also that Roy didn't care "a hill of beans" for all the Wilson cash.

The world was wide; he had youth, a good profession as a surveyor, and so far as the passing of the counterfeit bill was concerned, Wilson knew that there were thousands of people who wouldn't care whether Roy had passed it or not, providing he was willing to spend the proceeds in mutual pleasures.

Old Man Wilson gave in.

He counted out seven hundred and fifty dollars in twenty dollar gold pieces and shoved them into Bill's hand with one that trembled.

"Try hard to stop this foolish marriage," he cried. "Try all you can. You will get the rest of the money if you are successful."

Bill spun a gold piece up in the air.

He dexterously caught it as it came down.

"This money don't smell of blood," he cried. "Say, Old Man Wilson, always pay out crooked money in gold. It don't make trouble then for anyone. See?"

"What are you doing next? What is your plan?" curiously asked Wilson.

"I'm going to lay out in the bushes. When Roy comes by—I know his game—I'm going to take a shot at him. Then I'll come back and get the rest of his death-money from you."

Bad Bill, with this parting shot, hurried slouchingly away, leaving Old Man Wilson a prey to many emotions.

"I think I'd better be away somewhere when that —ah shot is fired. I guess it won't be safe for me to be about when the news comes that Roy is— ah, dead. The surveyor is pretty popular here in Hangman's Gulch, and I guess I'm not very popular! I have had to—ah, be pretty hard sometimes in my business to keep me from losing money. I guess I will—ah, go away on this morning's coach to Fort Enterprise. I had better be as many miles away as I can when this matter happens."

Wilson thought deeply for a long space.

"If Bill should dare to confess I guess I will have to put myself in a position to meet such a possible attack, in case Bad Bill failed and was arrested."

Wilson immediately let it be generally known that a sneak-thief had entered his bank during the previous night and had stolen seven hundred and fifty dollars from him.

Then with a flourish of trumpets Wilson left on the noon coach for Fort Coppermine, leaving his daughter, whom he thought to be absolutely unsuspicious of his plot, in charge of his bank and store.

But who can fathom the depths of a young girl's mind?

The Coppermine coach had not been gone ten minutes when Enid began to "get busy."

She sent for Moosejaw, an Indian lad of the Sioux nation, who ran errands for half the village, and thus was the center of half the intrigues of the hamlet, and told him to mount a horse, and rush to Owen Judd with a note.

The lad stared at the gold piece that the girl gave him.

When Enid promised a second gold piece on top of the first if he made speed, and brought Owen to her in half an hour, the way the Indian boy lashed his horse was a crime.

Owen, busy in the midst of the trackless forests on Horn Mountains, with his gang, in surveying the way for the stage-road, was greatly surprised at the whirlwind exhibition of speed the Indian made.

"Town burning up?" asked Owen of the boy.

Moosejaw stolidly shook his head.

"Indian uprising?"

Moosejaw's eyes twinkled.

He shook his head again.

"Anyone dead?"

"Note."

Moosejaw cried this one word. His extended arm and hand pointed to the astonished white man, why he was there.

As soon as Owen read Enid's wild appeal for help and her wish that he hurry to her side, Owen was all fire and action.

"Moosejaw," Owen cried, "You walk back. I take your horse. Mine not here just now. See?"

The boy nodded.

"Hurry back," shouted Owen as he spurred the broncho down the winding way that led to Enid.

So it was that in an amazing short space of time Enid and Owen were in quick consultation.

"You are sure you heard of this plot?" asked Owen. "No mistake in it?"

"None."

"You saw the money pass?"

"Yes."

"That settles it."

"What will you do?"

"You stay here," cried Owen. "Don't you say a word to anyone. Don't try to communicate with Roy at all. This matter is one for me to deal with."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to send for my men, and we are going to arrest Bad Bill Williams."

"Good!"

"Then we will hang him so high that the crows can pick out his eyes without the slightest trouble in the world."

CHAPTER XIII.

BAD BILL'S PLOT FAILS.

It was a deadly company that strode, two hours later, up to Bad Bill Williams' cottage.

The entire surveying force of Roy Jerome was in the grim party.

Owen Judd was in the lead.

Every man was armed to the teeth.

Rifles bristled in every hand.

Revolvers and knives hung at every belt.

"Surround the house," cried Judd as soon as Old Madge's cabin was reached.

The earnest company had within a moment spread out, got around the hut, and were awaiting the next move of Owen's.

They all had come to the conclusion that there was now a time come when organized society should take its way, and punish the evil-doer, Bad Bill Williams, the outlaw.

Every man knew that the evidence against Bill would be hard to produce.

Enid would not care to testify against the bandit for if she did her own father's neck would be the forfeit.

They also knew that the law's course would be tedious.

They knew further that the best way out of the entire matter was to surround Bill's cottage, and take him and his hell-cat of a mother out and lynch them.

There was no necessity for taking the remainder of the hamlet of Hangman's Gulch into their deliberations.

"Boys," cried Owen, "we don't even want Roy Jerome to know we are going to lynch that pair of crooks. I hate, myself, to lynch a woman, but Old Madge is too dangerous to be left alone in this camp after her son is dead. She might stir up the lawless. Then there would be more trouble. We will make this matter a final one, quick. See?"

A vote was then taken.

It was unanimous.

The death penalty was decided thus to be the fate of Bad Bill Williams, counterfeiter, and Old Madge Williams, his mother, who was aiding him in his career of crime.

"Now boys," said Owen softly, when he looked around upon the gang of determined faces that made the guard around the hut of the two criminals who had been set aside for death, "two of you come along with me inside. We will make the arrest."

"Well Bill, dearie," the men heard the hag-like mother of the outlaw say just at they entered the hut, "you made the deal with Old Man Wilson."

"Sure."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to finish cleaning this rifle, and these revolvers and then I'm going out to shoot up Roy Jerome."

"Good! That's my darling boy. Now you've made up your mind that's the only thing to do, Billy boy. Kill Roy as soon as you can, get the rest of that reward. Then you fly with me to some other place. This isn't the only town in the North-West."

The three men exchanged glances.

They knew now that Old Madge was as deep in the mud of crime as her son was in its mire.

"Yes, it's the best way, Mother," Bad Bill growled. "There ain't nothin' in being chicken-hearted. Kill a man if there's money in it say I, just as you would kill a chicken."

"That's the talk. Like your dear father."

"Well, I'm all ready. This gun is a dandy," cried Bill.

He laid the weapon down.

This was the chance that the silent party of three had been waiting for.

Owen Judd stepped forward.

His hand held his revolver.

He trained it on Bad Bill's head.

"Hands up!"

The hissing tone of Judd filled the room.

Bad Bill saw the three silent figures, Owen in the lead, with his revolver poised.

The other two men also had their weapons extended. They were ready to back up the hands of their leader.

Bad Bill was no coward.

Like a stroke of lightning his hand closed on his own revolver which lay by his side.

Without even an attempt to pick it up, and with that perfect direction that mere instinct seems to give the gun-fighter, Bill pressed the trigger of his weapon.

Owen saw the action.

He pressed the trigger to his own weapon.

The men behind him also saw the action of the outlaw.

They also pressed the triggers of their respective weapons.

Flash!

Bang!

The four revolvers fired almost together, made a great ringing burst of sound.

Old Madge had seen her son's action.

She had started to rush toward him to stop his attempt to shoot.

The old woman just managed to stagger directly in the line of fire.

The bullet of her son, intended to kill Owen Judd, struck her in her back.

The three shots fired by the three members of the lynching party struck Old Madge directly in front.

"Gentlemen, for Gods——"

A bright red rush of blood from the hag's throat stopped her words.

She rattled in her throat.

Old Madge turned her eyes toward her son.

He was struggling in the iron grasp of Owen Judd.

"Bill!" cried the crone.

One of the men in the room who had rushed to Old Madge's side laid her gently down.

Another tip-toed over to a bed at one side of the room and covered the unsightly wreck of a woman with a long sheet.

Old Madge had paid the penalty of her crimes.

She was dead by the effort she had made to save the life of her worthless son.

Bad Bill at least was no coward.

He laughed when he saw the body of his mother stretched out under the sheet.

"Old woman has beaten me into the other world," he cried. "Well what the——do you feller's want me to do now."

"I may as well tell you we are going to hang you," said Owen in solemn accents.

"You may as well spare your breath," mimmicked the outlaw. "I knew that when you covered me with your gun and yelled 'hands up."

"Have you anything to say?"

"What's the use of palaverin'?"

"Don't you want time to prepare for death?"

"Naw. I was always ready to die with my boots on any old time. The outlaw knows that any minute he lives may be his last one."

"We feel that it is our duty to hang you."

"All right. You're three to one here, and I don't know how many you have outside. What's the use of my putting any argument up? You'll hang me anyway no matter what I say."

"Will you tell me what disposition you want made of your body after you are dead?"

"I don't give an owl's hoot what you do with it. But there's five hundred dollars in gold in under my pillow in that side room over there. There's some seven hundred and fifty in gold in my clothes I have on. I wish you'd take that cash, bury the old woman decently with it, and put a nice tombstone over her. She was a good old woman to me better than I deserved."

"There's one thing more."

Bad Bill shot a glance at Owen.

"What is it?" he snarled.

"You might as well confess that you were hired by Old Man Wilson to kill Roy Jerome."

"Confess? You're nutty. You can't prove the game you want by me. I want you to know that Bad Bill isn't bad enough to split on a chap that had treated him square."

"We know of your compact with Wilson."

"The——you do."

"We know of your getting seven hundred and fifty dollars in gold from him to assassinate Roy for!"

"Gosh! If you know so much why ask me?"

"We know that you are a counterfeiter?"

"You can't prove it."

"We know you have cached your plate-press and the bogus money you have made somewhere in the woods."

"Somewhere?"

Bad Bill's mocking laughter could be heard a long distance.

"That's it. Somewhere," he sneered.

Then Bad Bill roared again.

"You will never know what has become of that plate-press and that bogus money," he said. "There's one secret you don't know and you won't know."

Owen saw that it was no use.

"There's an old gallows further up Hangman's Gulch," cried Owen. "It's been there years and has figured in other lynchings."

"You bet it has," howled Bill, bravo to the last. "My father was lynched there twenty years ago. Well what's good enough for dear old dad is good enough for his son. Now kill me as quick as you can."

Before he was swung into the other world, bold, bad, with fearless eyes turned upon his captors, Bad Bill called Owen to one side.

He spoke long and with some detail, the watchers around the rough scaffold could see.

"Now then boys," yelled the outlaw when he had finished. "I'll meet you in the hot place."

A few convulsive twitches, a swaying of the dark form of the bandit marked the end of his life.

Soon he swung from the same gallows that had been used to execute his father; a grim, terrible warning to other bad-men and gun-fighters everywhere.

Owen Judd breathed freer when he saw that Bad Bill Williams was dead.

"I am sorry he told me that before he died," Judd whispered to himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GHOST.

Silently the body of Bad Bill was at length taken from the gallows.

Swift messengers had hurried back to Hangman's Gulch and had bought a plain rough coffin.

The news of the lynching and the death of Old Madge had gotten about the hamlet by magic.

But there was no expressions of regret.

There seemed to be a unanimous opinion that Bad Bill and Old Madge had met a merited fate.

Enid, white-faced and a little remorseful at herself for allowing her foolish, romantic escapade to involve so many people in such a tragedy, was softly sobbing on Roy Jerome's shoulder; for with the death of Bad Bill and his mother, and the practical flight of Old Man Wilson, there was now no longer a reason for Roy's continuing to play the part of an outlaw, and fugitive from justice.

Constable Brennan had seen the way opinion was trending.

He had no great anxiety to remain at Hangman's Gulch and with a wink at Tom Godfrey had remarked that "the warrant against Roy Jerome had better be side-tracked?" and when he saw the assenting wink in the eye of the jolly saloon keeper, had vanished like a dream.

Godfrey was the first to meet Roy when he walked into the village.

"If you've got another thousand dollar bill," Godfrey cried, "I'll take a chanst again on it, and change it for you."

Enid, considerably chastened as to her kittenish romantic views of things, met Roy and told him of the death of Old Madge, and the lynching of Bad Bill.

"I thought that something like this might happen," Roy said dryly. "My boys are pretty liable to make trouble if they are pushed too far. In this case while every one knew I was innocent the quickest way was to do as has been done. Dead people generally do not make charges, eh?"

Enid nodded.

She felt relieved that her share in the affair would never be known. It was all buried behind the still white lips of Old Madge and her son Bad Bill.

Owen came in just then and greeted Roy with great pleasure.

"When?" he asked pointing with a smile to Enid.

"We are waiting for the clergyman now!"

And there stood the clergyman in the doorway laughing.

It was springing a wedding-day pretty quickly on Enid, but there had been so many terrifying things about her for so long, that she thought a husband wouldn't terrify her more than the conspiracy of which she had been the center, and before she could make protest she found herself to be Mrs. Roy Jerome, and glad of it, at that.

"If you can separate yourself from Mrs. Jerome long enough to come with me, Roy," smiled Owen, "there's something I'd like to talk over with you."

Roy followed Owen to the scaffold where Bad Bill had been executed.

The body of the outlaw lay in the coffin at one side of the gallows.

"What's that," cried Roy, as he indicated a white form that was seen standing near the coffin and pointing at it with one skinny, white, spectral hand.

They heard the figure speak.

"So this is the last of Bad Bill, desperado, gunman, renegade, of Hangman's Gulch," hissed the shrieking voice of *The Ghost of Horn Mountains.*

Roy jumped back with his face almost as white as the figure that as soon as it saw the two men, ran shrieking, sobbing and wailing back toward the fastness of its mountain home.

"What is that?" cried Roy. "Is not that the ghost that warned me when I first came into this confounded country? Is this not another warning that comes to me on my wedding day?"

Owen winked.

"Don't get scared, Roy," he cried.

"Oh, but wouldn't you get frightened if you found that for the second time you were to be warned of your impending disaster by that figure?"

"E-e-um," yawned Owen.

"What are you yawning about?"

"Nothing. Only I can explain all about that ghostly presence, if you will keep your trap closed and not go howling here about 'warnings!'"

"Go ahead then."

"That is no ghost."

"Well?"

"It is a woman."

"What?"

"That poor half mad creature was the wife of Bad Bill Williams who lies in that coffin there. Now she is Bad Bill William's widow."

"Good God!"

Roy's face was white with emotion.

"How did you learn this?"

"Bad Bill told me on the gallows ten minutes before he was lynched."

"Ah."

"Yes. He married that poor mad thing ten years ago. Three years ago in a fit of drunken rage he *kicked her out of doors to die.*"

"The wretch."

"The poor thing fled to the mountains. There she has ever since been wandering, a demented, crazed wreck."

"Then she is the phantom that has been scaring us all?"

"Yes."

"Did Bad Bill know this fact?"

"Yes."

"He richly deserved his fate."

"Yes. But he had one decent moment just before he died. He told me where he had quite a sum of money in gold secreted, and asked me to get it, and then try and rescue his wife. The money was to be used in her support and after her death for her burial."

"Whew! I'm glad the mystery is over."

"Roy," added Owen, solemnly. "*The Tragedy of Hangman's Gulch* is not in yonder coffin where the dead outlaw lies. He richly deserved the death that has overtaken him. The real tragedy lies out there in the poor woman, the outlaw's wife, the so called *Ghost of Horn Mountains.*"

* * * * * * * * * * * *

Old Man Wilson, when he heard at Fort Enterprise of the fate of Bad Bill Williams and Old Madge, decided not to return to Hangman's Gulch for a while.

In fact he wrote to his daughter that he felt like going abroad for a much needed rest, although Roy Jerome said he was "going to give Hangman's Gulch a much needed rest."

Wilson asked Enid to continue the business of "her loving father," for a few months until the miser returned.

Substantial drafts were soon after received in favor of the old man, but after a few months he wrote that he had decided not to return to Hangman's Gulch.

He offered to sell out the business to Enid and Roy, "whom I do not feel like congratulating upon your marriage to," the miser added.

Roy roared.

He, however, bought the business of the old man at terms fair toward both, and then resigned from the surveying staff of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Owen Judd was immediately appointed to the vacant place, and to-day heads his gang of bright young men who are putting in the paths for civilization in the way of road-making for the Hudson's Bay Company in the great trackless wilds of the North-West.

And there's not a happier couple in the world than Mr. and Mrs. Roy Jerome.

Owen Judd and Roy between them finally succeeded in capturing the wife of Bad Bill, and had her placed in a sanitarium where she has the best of care.

She is getting saner day by day, but there is little hope that she will ever fully regain her reason.

But with her capture passed away *The Ghost of Horn Mountains* although the actors in the bitter days that have ended so peacefully for so many, never have forgotten *The Tragedy of Hangman's Gulch.*

THE END.

The next issue will be

American Indian Weekly, No. 15,

Entitled

THE TREASURES OF MACKENZIE ISLES,

or

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TO BE PUBLISHED ON FRIDAY.

Feb. 3—136. Foiled by Fate; being the sequel to The House of Fear.
Feb. 10—137. A Dash for Millions; or Old Ironsides Trail of Mystery.
Feb. 17—138. The Trail of Three; or The Motor Pirates' Last Stand.
Feb. 24—139. A Dead Man's Hand; or Caught by his Own Victim.

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LIST OF TITLES

No. 1.	THE OUTLAW'S PLEDGE	or The Raid on the Old Stockade
No. 2.	TRACKED TO HIS LAIR	or The Pursuit of the Midnight Raider
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TO BE PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY

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